



WORKING WITH ORGANIZED LABOR

Organized labor is a valuable partner in a local School-to-Career system, bringing experience, commitment, knowledge and resources to the partnership. Labor unions are uniquely positioned not only to help educate students about the world of work and long-sought rights and protections for workers, but also to provide safe, supportive work-based learning experiences for students.

Strategies for Working with Labor

View organized labor as a catalyst for program development.

Labor unions are most effective in a School-to-Career system when viewed as catalysts for program development and not as special interests requiring recognition. It is important that organized labor be involved in School-to-Career initiatives from the beginning.

Identify growing occupations.

Organized labor can assist with identifying which occupations are most appropriate to target for School-to-Career. Labor unions are actively involved in analyzing occupational and employer trends and as a result are well equipped to identify which industries are likely to experience the most growth and hold the most promise for the future.

Link academic to occupational learning.

Organized labor offers a rich source of knowledge as to which academic skills are most needed for success at work. Collaborative partnerships between teachers and workers improve curricula by including real-world applications in the classroom. This not only acquaints teachers and workers with each other, but also helps students identify connections between school and work.

Develop skill standards and credentialing techniques.

Successful School-to-Career systems hold participants to high academic and occupational standards. Organized labor can play a significant role in the development of the skill standards in key occupations and industries. Once developed, these standards can be used to create student credentials or skill certifications.

Understand occupational safety and health standards.

Work-based learning experiences often provide students with their first awareness of the potential dangers of working with machinery, equipment or hazardous materials, as well as the importance of clean air and safety conditions at the worksite. Front-line workers, in conjunction with classroom teachers, can help prepare students to function safely at work. They can also help students understand their safety rights and responsibilities. Involving organized labor in this aspect of School-to-Career further utilizes the knowledge of front-line workers and makes the workplace safer for students.

For more information visit:

California Federation of Labor

<http://www.calaborfed.org>

State Building and Construction Trades Council

<http://www.sbctc.org>

California Apprenticeship Programs

<http://www.calapprenticeship.org>