

The National Work-Based Learning Alignment Project

National Advisory Committee

Roster of Participants

- **Amstutz, Leah** - Director of K-12 Pathways, Northwest Arkansas Council
- **Bach, Lara** - Director, Work-Based Learning, Strada Education Foundation
- **Baxter, Mark** - Partner, Bellwether
- **Burns, Bridget** - CEO, University Innovation Alliance
- **Castro, Sarah** - Executive Director, Programs, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- **Collier, Candi** - Senior Director of CTE and Military Readiness, Tennessee Department of Education
- **Curry, Daryl** - Chief Talent Development Officer, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce
- **Davis, Betsy** - Chief Operating Officer, Ascend Indiana
- **Di Bonaventura, Julia** - Senior Director, Programs and Strategy, Pathways Impact Fund
- **Gerson, Seth** - Policy Director, K-12 Education, National Governors Association
- **Haken, Brent** - State CTE Director, Oklahoma Department of Education
- **Imperatore, Catherine** - Research and Content Director, Association for Career and Technical Education
- **Jardine, Jan** - WBL Division Vice President, Association for Career and Technical Education; Assistant CTE Director, Aspen Peaks School District, Utah
- **Lawhorne, Dr. Angela** - Director of Career Education Programs & Workforce Partnerships, Virginia Community College System
- **Loeck, Stephanie** - Vice President of Strategic Development, GPS Education Partners
- **Loyd, Dr. Amy** - President & CEO, All4Ed
- **Mathers, Kathleen** - Principal, K-12, Education Strategy Group
- **Mchiti, Akram** - Learner Representative; Postsecondary CTE student, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, MA
- **Osborn, Steve** - Student Opportunity Officer, Rhode Island Department of Education
- **Rasmussen Foster, Laura** - Senior Program Manager, RTI International
- **Rousmaniere, Marinell** - CEO, Edvestors (Boston)
- **Specht, Krysti** - Senior Director, Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, JFF

- **Therriault, Susan** - Institute Fellow - Education Policy, American Institutes for Research
- **Treaster, Jacque** - Director of Dual Enrollment and CTE, Montana University System
- **Wall, Dr. Barbara** - Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Deputy Superintendent & State CTAE Director, Georgia Department of Education
- **White, Taylor** - Director, Postsecondary Pathways for Youth / Director, Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship, New America

Participant Bios

Amstutz, Leah - Director of K-12 Pathways, Northwest Arkansas Council

Leah Amstutz is the Director of K-12 Pathways for the Northwest Arkansas Council, a regional workforce and economic development organization representing employers. Prior to this role, she served as the State Administrator for the Office of CTE in the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce, one of multiple roles she held in her career at the Department. She also spent nine years in the classroom as an agricultural education teacher.

Bach, Lara - Director, Work-Based Learning, Strada Education Foundation

Lara Bach is the Director of Work-Based Learning at Strada Education Foundation where she works across the Work-Based Learning team, with a special focus on defining and guiding the practice of employer intermediaries - vital organizations working to fill gaps between industry and the education / workforce system - in order to grow work-based learning opportunities. Previously, Lara worked at Year Up United and their Grads of Life team where over her 10 year tenure she contributed to their direct service program and provided consultation for Fortune 500 executives and HR leaders looking to implement skills-first talent practices, including work-based learning. She holds a Masters of Science in Public Policy and Management from Carnegie Mellon's Heinz College, and a Bachelors of Science from Carnegie Mellon University.

Baxter, Mark - Partner, Bellwether

Mark Baxter is a Partner at Bellwether, where he leads the organization's work on state and federal education systems with a focus on supporting organizations on their higher education and career-connected learning

strategies. Prior to joining Bellwether, Mark helped grow Rodel's technical assistance and impact of career pathways in Delaware.

Burns, Bridget - CEO, University Innovation Alliance

Bridget Burns is CEO of the University Innovation Alliance (UIA), a national consortium of 19 leading public research universities working together to improve student success and economic mobility through innovation. She leads collaborative efforts to scale evidence-based practices that strengthen career readiness, workforce alignment, and postsecondary outcomes.

Castro, Sarah - Executive Director, Programs, U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Sarah Castro is an Executive Director of Programs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation. Sarah oversees the Foundation's Employer Provided Innovation Challenges (EPIC) initiative. EPIC's goal is to scale employer-led, project-based learning opportunities for learners across the country.

Collier, Candi - Senior Director of CTE and Military Readiness, Tennessee Department of Education

Candi Collier is a 26-year veteran of CTE, serving as state director, district CTE director, statewide WBL trainer, teacher, and WBL district coordinator. She started her career and as WBL teacher and coordinator in 2000. She has seen it transition from "co-op" to the myriad of experiences offered now. WBL is a focus area in Tennessee, and she will share all they have learned.

Curry, Daryl - Chief Talent Development Officer, Nashville Area Chamber of Commerce

In his role as Chief Talent Development Officer, Daryl spearheads innovative strategies that empower the local workforce, expand educational opportunities, and cultivate enduring partnerships that drive Nashville's economic and community prosperity. Prior to his work at the Nashville Chamber, Curry was in direct service work at Oasis Center, the Martha O'Bryan Center, and AmeriCorps. He graduated from the University of the South and has an MBA from Tennessee Tech.

Davis, Betsy - Chief Operating Officer, Ascend Indiana

Betsy Davis recently joined Ascend Indiana, focused on strategic insights toward workforce development in Indiana. Prior to this role, Betsy served as Senior Vice President of Career Pathways at EmployIndy, where she led strategies connecting K-12 education, postsecondary institutions, employers, and community partners to expand high-quality career-connected learning and work-based learning opportunities. She has extensive experience designing and career-connected learning, career coaching, and workforce initiatives.

Di Bonaventura, Julia - Senior Director, Programs and Strategy, Pathways Impact Fund

Julia di Bonaventura is Senior Director of Programs and Strategy for the Pathways Impact Fund at StriveTogether, where she leads strategies to support regional intermediaries advancing high-quality career pathways. She brings almost a decade of experience building pathways systems and supporting intermediary organizations, having previously led multi-state and multi-region pathways initiatives at Jobs for the Future through the Pathways to Prosperity Network. Her career began as a career counselor for the Boston Private Industry Council and continued at Brigham and Women's Hospital, where she led work-based learning initiatives supporting high school and college students — giving her hands-on experience with work-based learning from both the intermediary and direct-service sides.

Gerson, Seth - Policy Director, K-12 Education, National Governors Association

Seth Gerson, Policy Director for K-12 Education at the National Governors Association (NGA), leads the team supporting Governors and their key policy staff in developing and implementing K-12 education policies and priorities in their states. Prior to joining NGA, Gerson was director of government relations for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. In that role, he advised policymakers on ways in which federal and state policy can support and strengthen the teaching profession. Previously, Gerson served as a senior policy advisor to U.S. Senator Jack Reed of Rhode Island during his time as a senior member of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. In that capacity, he advised Senator Reed on all legislation related to early childhood care and education, K-12 education, career and technical education, college access and affordability, and national service.

Haken, Brent - State CTE Director, Oklahoma Department of Education

Brent Haken serves as State Director of the Oklahoma Department of Career and Technology Education, where he leads statewide efforts to prepare Oklahomans for successful careers. A strong advocate for work-based learning, he champions partnerships between education and industry that provide students with real-world experience and pathways to high-demand careers. His leadership focuses on strengthening Oklahoma's workforce by expanding opportunities that connect classroom learning with hands-on training.

Imperatore, Catherine - Research and Content Director, Association for Career and Technical Education

As Research and Content Director at the Association for Career and Technical Education, Catherine Imperatore has nearly 20 years of experience in CTE, with an emphasis on federal and state CTE policy and implementation, CTE research, and CTE data and accountability. She co-developed the ACTE Quality CTE Program of Study Framework®, an evidence-based set of standards defining a high-quality CTE program of study; authors many of the association's publications; and provides technical assistance and support to state and local CTE systems. Ms. Imperatore has a master's degree in sociology from George Mason University.

Jardine, Jan - WBL Division Vice President, Association for Career and Technical Education; Assistant CTE Director, Aspen Peaks School District, Utah

Jan Jardine is the Work-Based Learning Division Vice President for the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE) and the Assistant CTE Director for Aspen Peaks School District in American Forks, Utah. She formerly served as the District Work-Based Learning Coordinator and Director of Provo CAPS in Provo City School District, Utah. She has spent more than 25 years working in career and technical education and is passionate about helping schools and industry partners create meaningful work-based learning experiences that prepare students for their futures.

Lawhorne, Dr. Angela - Director of Career Education Programs & Workforce Partnerships, Virginia Community College System

Dr. Angela Lawhorne is the Director of Career Education Programs & Workforce Partnerships for the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and is an Advance CTE Postsecondary State CTE Leaders Fellow Alumni. She oversees statewide initiatives such as Perkins V, Apprenticeships & Work-based Learning, the Tech Talent Investment Pipeline, US Naval Community College partnership, Get a Skill, Get a Job, Get Ahead (G3)

program, Workforce Pipeline Funding, and higher education for justice-impacted individuals initiatives. Her experience includes 14-years in higher ed and a total of 25-years in workforce development.

Loeck, Stephanie - Vice President of Strategic Development, GPS Education Partners

Stephanie Loeck is Vice President of Strategic Development at GPS Education Partners, where she leads initiatives that foster social impact and expand access to high-quality work-based learning across the country. She is a co-author of the organization's recently published book, "Make School Work: Solving the American Youth Employment Crisis Through Work-Based Learning".

Loyd, Dr. Amy - President and CEO, All4Ed

Dr. Amy Loyd has spent her career building work-based learning into the backbone of American education policy and practice, from launching and leading the national Pathways to Prosperity Network, to leading JFF's Center on Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, to embedding real-world work experience as a cornerstone of college and career pathways systems nationwide. As U.S. Assistant Secretary for Career, Technical, and Adult Education, she translated that vision into federal action through Perkins and Unlocking Career Success, pushing for every high schooler to graduate with work-based learning, industry credentials, and college credit in hand. Now leading All4Ed, she's scaling the conviction that learning tied to real work builds real opportunity, and she's transforming our education-to-career systems so that every student has thriving, choice-filled lives

Mathers, Kathleen - Principal, K-12, Education Strategy Group

Kathleen Mathers, Principal at Education Strategy Group, leads the firm's secondary education work helping state and local leaders build stronger systems connecting K12, higher ed, and employment. She has designed and directed major initiatives — e.g. FutureReadyNYC, Launch, and New Skills ready network — with work-based learning at their core, connecting students to industry-aligned experiences that build technical and durable skills as well as social capital. Prior to ESG, she served as Executive Director of Georgia's Governor's Office of Student Achievement and as a State Director at the Georgia Department of Education, led education programming at a non-profit science center, and spent eight years teaching in Atlanta classrooms, grounding her policy work in firsthand experience.

Mchiti, Akram - Learner Representative; Postsecondary CTE student, Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, MA

Akram Mchiti is a sophomore at Wentworth Institute of Technology in Boston, Massachusetts, majoring in Data Science, with a minor in Economics. Akram has served in leadership roles as a representative of the Career Technical Education Advisory Council for the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and as a state officer on the Executive Council for SkillsUSA Massachusetts.

Osborn, Steve - Student Opportunity Officer, Rhode Island Department of Education

Steve Osborn is the Student Opportunity Officer at the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE). He leads PrepareRI, Rhode Island's statewide strategy to align K-12 education, higher education, workforce development, and commerce, with a strong emphasis on reimagining high schools through rigorous, externally validated pathways. Under his leadership, Rhode Island has dramatically expanded employer-led demand-driven career and technical education (CTE), scaled work-based learning opportunities, dual enrollment credits earned, built the Rhode Island Advanced Coursework Network to provide course choice to advanced courses for all students statewide, and achieved national leadership in AP performance growth.

Rasmussen Foster, Laura - Senior Program Manager, RTI International

Laura Rasmussen Foster is a senior program manager at RTI International with 20 years of experience advancing career and technical education (CTE), workforce development, and adult education systems. She leads evaluations and technical assistance and translates research into actionable tools and guidance. Her work includes leading development of the U.S. Department of Education's Work-Based Learning Toolkit and Employability Skills Framework and contributing to the evaluation of the New Skills Ready Network.

Rousmaniere, Marinell - CEO, Edvestors (Boston)

Marinell Rousmaniere is the President & CEO of EdVestors, an education intermediary in Boston with a significant footprint in the career pathways space. She has been connected to work-based learning for young people throughout her career, including serving as Executive Director of MYTOWN, a

creative youth development and employment organization connecting teens to Boston's diverse history, and as a high school based career specialist with the Boston Private Industry Council. A first generation college student, Marinell is a proud graduate of Connecticut College and holds an MBA in public and nonprofit management from Boston University.

Specht, Krysti - Senior Director, Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, JFF

Krysti Specht is a Senior Director within JFF's Center for Apprenticeship and Work-Based Learning, leading JFF's larger work-based learning strategy and supporting the integration of meaningful work-based learning into education and workforce systems nationally. Krysti led the development of JFF's Work-Based Learning Framework and oversees a portfolio of work that includes youth apprenticeship, place-based strategies, technical assistance, governance and policy, and sector specific expertise. Prior to JFF, Krysti worked for San Francisco's Office of Economic and Workforce Development for a Mayoral Initiative called TechSF, and was charged with building comprehensive work-based learning and apprenticeship programs for local jobseekers looking to enter the tech sector.

Therriault, Susan - Institute Fellow - Education Policy, American Institutes for Research

Susan Therriault the director of the CTE Research Network and is an education policy expert dedicated to improving pathways that connect K-12 learning with postsecondary and workforce opportunities. Her career centers on designing evidence-based solutions that expand access to high-quality career readiness programs.

Treaster, Jacque - Director of Dual Enrollment and CTE, Montana University System

Jacque Treaster is a higher education and workforce development leader with extensive experience advancing work-based learning, career and technical education, and dual enrollment initiatives. As Director of Dual Enrollment and State Career & Technical Education for the Montana University System, she collaborates with education, industry, and government partners to strengthen career pathways and expand equitable access to workforce opportunities for learners across Montana communities.

Wall, Dr. Barbara - Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) Deputy Superintendent & State CTAE Director, Georgia Department of Education

Dr. Wall has served for the Georgia Department of Education for over a decade. Under Dr. Wall's leadership, Georgia has been a national leader in work-based learning efforts, and has recently added work-based learning as a College and Career Readiness Performance Indicator and a statewide diploma type.

White, Taylor - Director, Postsecondary Pathways for Youth / Director, Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship, New America

Taylor White is the Director of Postsecondary Pathways for Youth program at New America's Center on Education & Labor, which focuses on policies and programmatic innovations designed to strengthen the link between education and economic opportunity. In this role she oversees a range of research and technical assistance activities, including the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA), a national field-building initiative she has directed since 2020.