

Why CTE? How County Offices of Education Are Redefining Student Success

A Co-Presentation by Kathy Boyd (OCDE) & Dr. Matthew Tessier (SDCOE)

April 11, 2026 | Board Member Conference



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What Was Your First Job?

-  Turn to your neighbor — take 3 minutes.
-  What did you learn on that job that school never taught you?
-  What skills did you wish you had walking in?



Every Region Faces the Same Tension: College-or-Career is a False Choice

The College Path & Rising Costs



California's cost of living is rising faster than wage growth.



Only ~13% of students who enter a 4-year university graduate within 6 years.



Implicit message to students: "Unless you get a 4-year degree, you are less than."

The Career Path & Unfilled Opportunities



Skilled trades, healthcare, and tech infrastructure jobs go unfilled at high wages.



High schools celebrate "Decision Day" for college, but ignore apprenticeships and trade certifications.

**THE QUESTION FOR BOARD MEMBERS IS NOT WHETHER CTE MATTERS.
IT'S WHETHER YOUR REGION IS INVESTING IN IT STRATEGICALLY.**

TWO COUNTIES. ONE DIRECTION.

ORANGE COUNTY (OCDE)



NORTH STAR

Student access to career readiness equal to college.



CORE BELIEF

Every student deserves a clear path to employment.



STRATEGIC VEHICLE

OC Pathways (PK-12 through postsecondary).

SAN DIEGO COUNTY (SDCOE)



NORTH STAR

Eradicating poverty & increasing belonging.



CORE BELIEF

Knowing your strengths means you belong.



STRATEGIC VEHICLE

Transformational Learning Experiences + Belonging.



**“Neither of us is anti-college.
We are pro-options — and pro-access.”**



We Didn't Learn the Traditional Way — and Neither Do Most Kids



KATHY BOYD | OCDE

KATHY'S WHY:



School counseling background: students only had 5 minutes to plan futures.



Built visual career maps so parents could see the path.



Saw "Decision Day" exclude non-college bound students.

DR. MATTHEW'S WHY:



Father was a cabinet builder: learned math/reading in a cabinet shop.



Daughters navigated a system pushing only college.



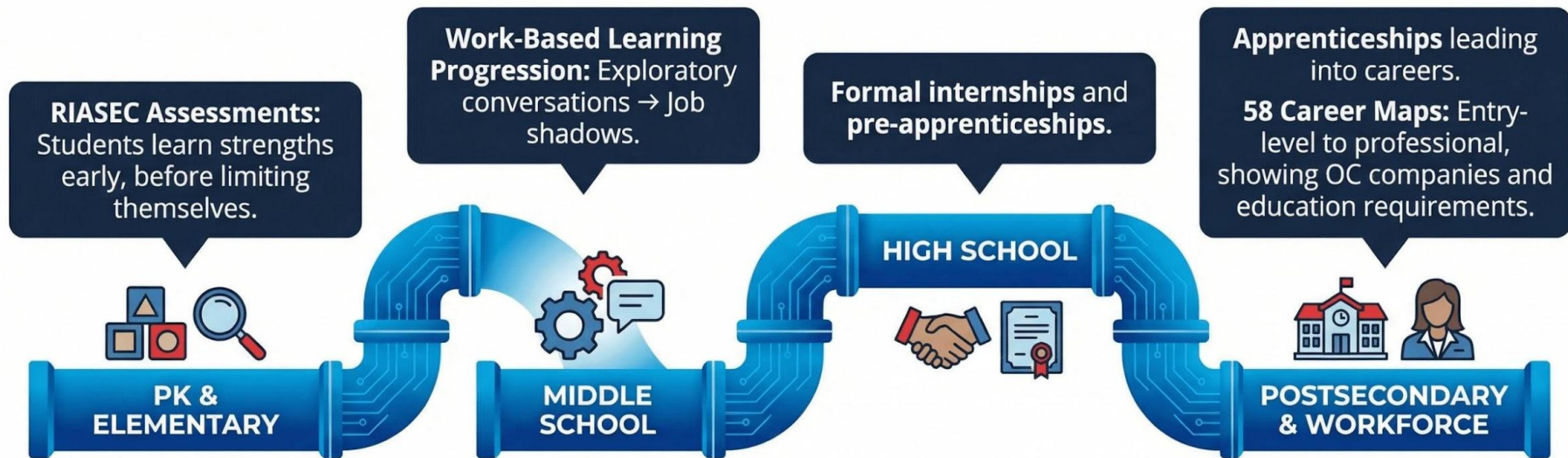
Kids buy into stereotypes early: "They can't be what they can't see."



DR. MATTHEW TESSIER | SDCOE

There is no shortage of talent. There is a shortage of access.

OC Pathways: Building the Ecosystem from PK Through Postsecondary



Launched in 2013 with California Career Pathway Trust funding.



58 Career Maps: One per sector, detailed progression, OC companies, and education requirements.



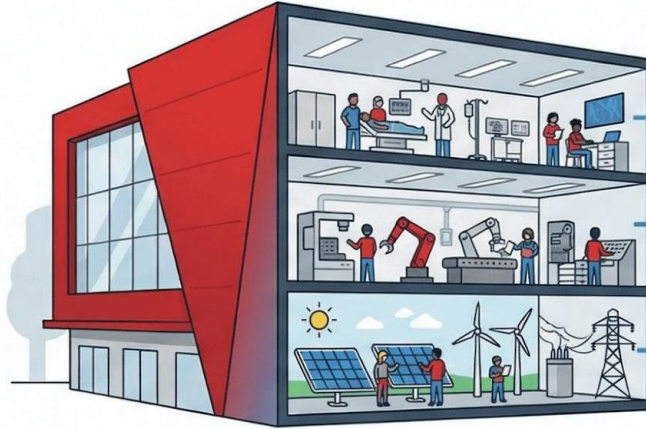
Sustainability Built In: Districts have titled positions accountable to this work.

San Diego's Innovation Center: Where Kids Come to Discover Who They Are



Building & Experience

- A 3-story building where students from across the county come for 3–5 days.
- Students choose their own experience — “à la carte” career exploration.



Specialized Sector Labs

Healthcare Lab

Advanced Manufacturing Lab

Energy/Construction/Utilities Lab

- Labs organized by economic sector: healthcare, advanced manufacturing, energy/construction/utilities, and more.



Career & Strengths Connection

RIASEC-based career cards connect student strengths to real jobs: median wage, projected growth, education required.

Teacher Model & Early Start



Experience



Co>Create



Facilitate

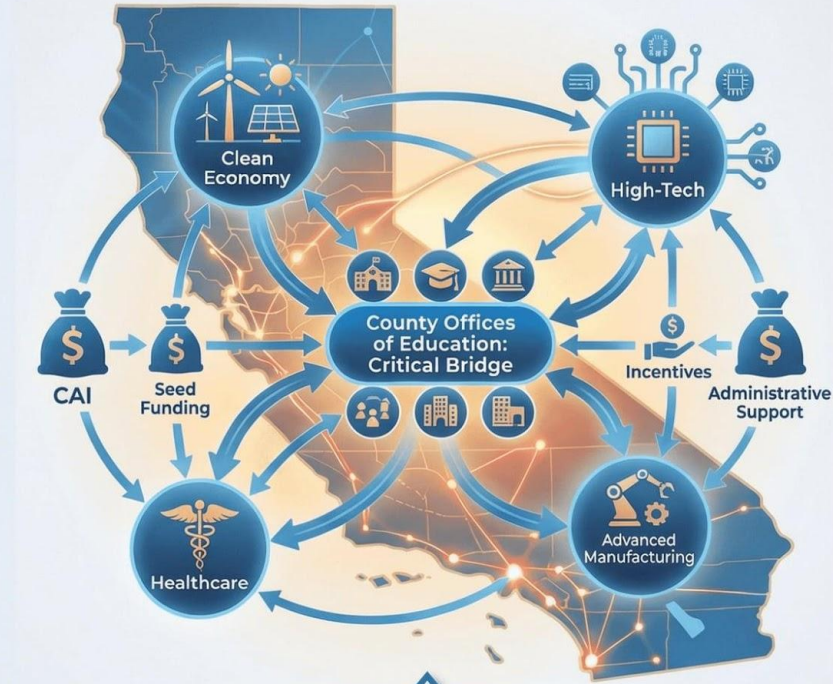
ECF Model for Teachers:
Experience → Co>Create → Facilitate
(scaling pedagogy county-wide).



Starting CTE-focused career development in Transitional Kindergarten.

The Statewide Opportunity: Funding the Future Workforce

- California is making unprecedented investments in apprenticeships and workforce development to build a resilient, equitable economy.
- Funding is available through initiatives like the California Apprenticeship Initiative (CAI) and the California Jobs First (CJF) Blueprint.
- The goal is to align regional talent pipelines with high-growth, high-wage sectors (e.g., Clean Economy, High-Tech, Healthcare, Advanced Manufacturing).
- County Offices of Education are uniquely positioned to serve as the critical bridge between K-12 systems, postsecondary institutions, and regional employers.
- By building registered apprenticeship programs, counties can unlock seed funding to incentivize local business participation and remove administrative burdens.



"The funding is there. The mandate is clear. The question is how strategically we align our regional assets to capture it."

Equity Is Not an Add-On — It's the Design

Orange County: Inclusive CTE & Data-Driven Equity



- **Inclusive** CTE initiative under Dr. Bean's 5-3-1 Plan



- **21 distinct work-based learning measures** tracked across all student subpopulations



- **Data-sharing agreements** with all districts — foster youth, students with disabilities, English learners, low-income students all tracked by engagement type



- Districts now have **actionable plans** tied to the College & Career Indicator for underperforming subgroups

San Diego: Community Schools & Intentional Targeting



- **District 1 Wednesday** — a dedicated day each week serving foster youth, adjudicated youth, incarcerated youth, and students in community schools



- **Intentional zip code targeting:** 91950 (most economically challenged in the county) — every third grader served at the Innovation Center, three times

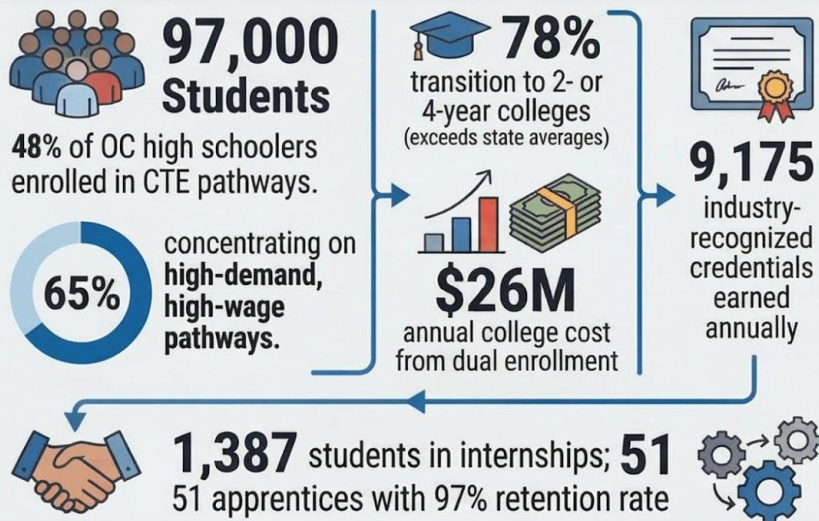


- **Partnerships** with San Diego Workforce Partnership to align career sectors to real economic opportunity

“Access is an equity issue. The data tells us where the gaps are. The question is whether we act on it.”

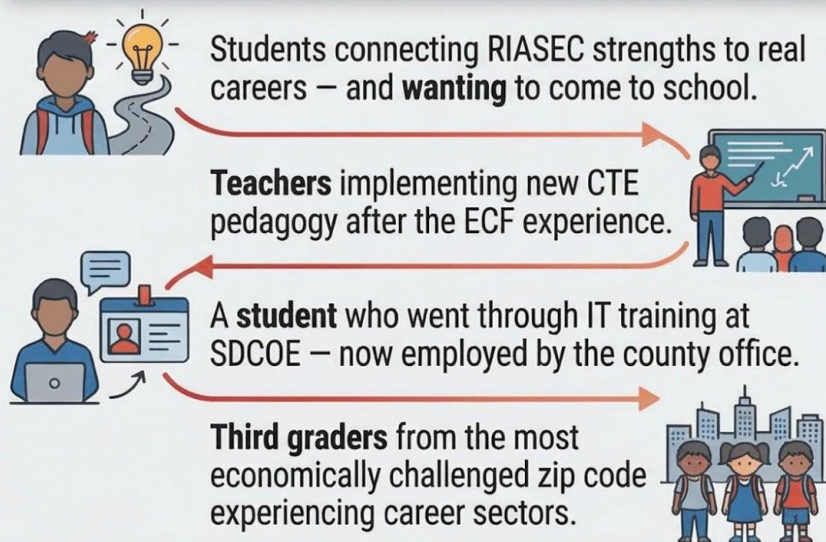
The Impact: Proven Pipelines and Powerful Stories

Orange County's PK-16 Talent Pipeline: Data-Driven Growth & Real Results



“There’s not a lack of talent.
There’s a lack of access.” – Kathy Boyd

San Diego: Powerful Stories of Connection & Belonging



“When kids know their strengths and see
the path, they naturally feel they belong.”
– Dr. Matthew Tessier

If We Don't Change the Message, We Can't Change the Outcome

CURRENT STATE: THE NARROWED PATH



- Right now, high schools celebrate “Decision Day” for 4-year college — and nothing else.
- Teachers wear college sweatshirts. The implicit message is clear.
- The A-through-G requirements are known by every California parent — CTE pathways are not.
- Kids can't be what they can't see — and if they're only seeing one path, we've already narrowed their future.



BOARD ACTION: SHIFTING THE CULTURE



Ask your districts: Are we celebrating all post-secondary choices equally?



Ask: Do our school counselors have career maps, not just college application checklists?



Ask: Is our master schedule aligned to regional workforce demand?

“ The shift from “college or career” to “college AND career” starts with the culture we build in our schools — and that culture is set at the board level. ”

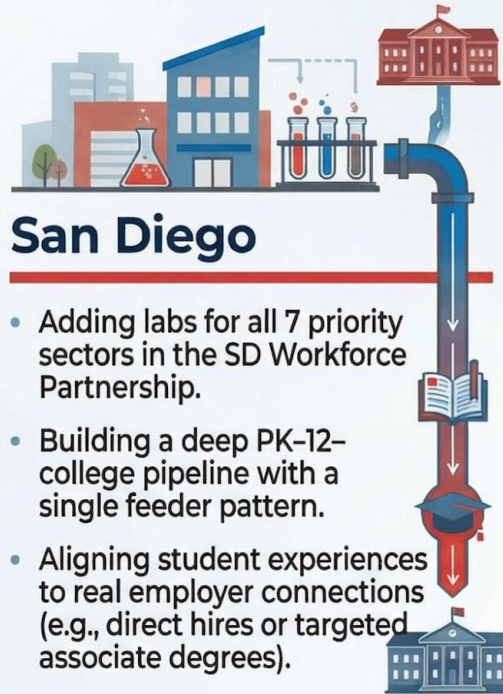
We're Building the Pipeline — Here's Where It Goes

The vision is a connected California where education and industry collaborate to create seamless pathways, empowering residents for in-demand careers and driving sustainable economic growth across all sectors.



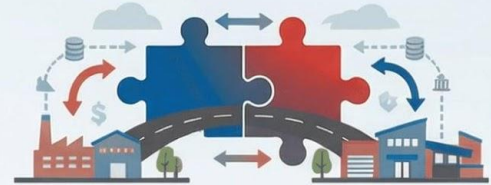
Orange County

- Expanding OC Pathways into a comprehensive PK-16 economic infrastructure.
- Aligning talent supply directly with regional demand in “Accelerate” (Life Sciences, Tech) and “Bet” (AI, Clean Energy) sectors.
- Scaling “Earn-and-Learn” models, including youth apprenticeships and paid internships, across all 58 career sectors.
- Closing the equity gap by targeting non-academic barriers for vulnerable students.



San Diego

- Adding labs for all 7 priority sectors in the SD Workforce Partnership.
- Building a deep PK-12–college pipeline with a single feeder pattern.
- Aligning student experiences to real employer connections (e.g., direct hires or targeted associate degrees).



Together

- Moving from isolated county efforts to a unified, statewide CTE ecosystem.
- Sharing data, curriculum models, and employer engagement strategies across regional lines.
- Empowering a network of 58 county offices to collectively shape California's future workforce.

Partnering for Regional Prosperity: How You Can Help Steer the Funding

Every region is doing great things with CTE. Your insight can help practitioners steer funding more strategically.

Identify High-Value Sectors

Share which career sectors you see as most critical for your specific community's economic future.



Highlight Equity Gaps

Point out specific neighborhoods or student groups in your area that might need targeted outreach or resources.



Bridge to Regional Organizations

Connect CTE practitioners with local businesses or chambers of commerce you already have relationships with.



Advocate for Work-Based Learning

Help champion the value of internships and apprenticeships within your network of regional employers.



**Board Member /
Regional Leader**



Collaborate on Strategy

Engage in conversations about how state funding (like CAI or CJF) can be best utilized to meet your district's unique needs.



"Your involvement helps us move from offering generic pathways to building strategic, localized economic engines."

Every Kid Deserves to See Themselves in a Future That Works

“They can’t be what they can’t see.”

The work of CTE is not about replacing college. It is about ensuring that every student — regardless of zip code, background, or learning style — has a **clear, supported, and celebrated path** to a **meaningful career** and a life **they can afford to live.**

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Questions? Let’s talk.

Your Turn: Talk and Turn

- Turn to your neighbor and discuss (3 minutes):
 - “As a board member, what is one thing you could do in the next 30 days to elevate CTE in your region?”
- Then: Open floor for questions and discussion.

