

## Insights from the Nevada Future of Learning Network

# Workforce Readiness

The [Nevada Commission on Innovation and Excellence in Education](#) (NCIEE) envisions a Nevada where the education system “seamlessly integrate[s] career exploration and work-based learning from an early age, offering students real-world experiences through internships, apprenticeships, and hands-on learning that align with classroom instruction” ([NCIEE 2025](#), p 5). This brief highlights how educators and leaders in Nevada made connections between the classroom and the real-world, and engaged learners in activities to prepare them for the workforce. It is part of a collection of briefs providing insights from activities facilitated by the Nevada Future of Learning Network.

The [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#) is a coalition of districts, leaders, educators, students, and community partners building a learner-centered, future-ready education system. It launched in 2023 as part of the Nevada Department of Education’s (NDE) effort to create the statewide [Portrait of a Nevada Learner](#) and advance [personalized, competency-based learning](#).

## Connections Between Classrooms and Careers

Educators described ways that they helped students connect learning to experiences outside of school through learner-centered, future-ready practice, and how they increased students’ exposure to different occupations through these out-of-school learning experiences. According to a survey administered at the Nevada Future of Learning Convening in January 2026, 79% of respondents strongly agreed and 20% agreed that students would be better prepared for the workforce if Nevada shifted to a more learner-centered, future-ready approach to education.

- **Farmer’s Market:** An elementary teacher shared how her 2nd grade students decided to have a farmer’s market in their school as part of their hydroponics lesson. The students visited each classroom to harvest crops, labeled them, and determined prices. The class set up a table with cashiers to sell their harvest. “They connected themselves to the community. They said, ‘Oh, I’m just like my mom when she does this,’ or, ‘I’m just like my dad when he does this,’ or, ‘I know that my parents go to a farmer’s market down the street,

and they buy things. And so I know what to say and do.’ And so I think they started to see themselves in a bigger picture.”

- **Hands-On Career Fairs:** A high school teacher described how their school went beyond a traditional career fair by providing hands-on experiences for students with employers from the area. For example, a medical flight company visited the school, and the company brought a helicopter and landed it on the football field for kids to see. “[...] they could touch the helicopter and see certain things. I mean, how does that not promote kids to go out and be successful?” The leader shared that while many students in the district had “no interest in going to a traditional college or university [...] there are a lot of kids that want to go to trade school and become an apprentice. And our district does a very good job of finding them a space and an avenue to make that possible.”
- **Internships:** A district leader shared that they have more than 60 students in paid internships within their community. Some of those students found that “those could very well turn into jobs for them right after high school,” and, for others, the experience led to “opportunities to go to industrial or trade schools...to come back and be a better employee.” The school district recognized that many of the employers in their community were looking for employees. “We target the workforces needed in our community with some of our courses” and provided students with opportunities to “be prepared for a job or for employment in the community if that’s what they want.”

## Supporting Transitions

Educators and district leaders described the importance of supporting students during transitions from middle school to high school and again from high school to college or careers. The transition moments are seen as opportune times for career exploration and hands-on experiences to prepare students for their future. According to the January 2026 Nevada Future of Learning Convening survey, 75% of respondents strongly agreed and 25% agreed that students would be better prepared to thrive in a changing world if they shifted to a more learner-centered, future-ready approach to education.

- **8th Grade Pathways:** A district leader shared how their 8th grade students engaged in a nine-week unit to answer these questions: “What have I learned up to this point? What are my future goals 10 years down the road? How do I backwards map where I want to be, to where I am now?” The unit culminated in visits to an employer and a college. “For almost all of them, that’s the first time they’ve ever been to a corporate work site as well as a college campus.”
- **Senior Transition Class:** The same district leader described a capstone class where students built a portfolio and shared evidence of their durable skills. They also learned how to do taxes, participate in mock interviews, write their resumes, and visit different employers. For those interested in college, they filled out college scholarship applications, and the FAFSA. The leader shared that this class was particularly important because families in their district have a range of economic circumstances. “We want to try to build the time and space for everybody to be able to do those things. And to me, that really focuses on being future-oriented and thinking about what that path is [for each student].”

## Getting Started

Educators and district leaders who want to enhance their focus on workforce readiness as part of a learner-centered, future-ready education could consider the following questions:

- What careers require the knowledge or skills that students learn in my class? How can I integrate those careers into learning activities?
- How might we expose students to colleges or careers while they are still in school? How can the community and district work together to prepare students for the future?
- At what transition points would students benefit from dedicated time and structures to consider their futures and build a plan to make their hopes a reality? What structures can help students execute their plans and address challenges that emerge?
- In what ways can the Portrait of a Nevada Learner or a locally developed portrait guide efforts aimed at ensuring that students are future-ready?

## Resources

- [Nevada Future of Learning Network](#)
- [KnowledgeWorks Portrait of a Leader](#)
- [Nevada Innovation Guide](#)
- [Nevada Future of Learning Network Case Studies](#)

The information shared in this brief is based on 26 interviews and the January 2026 Nevada Future of Learning Network Convening survey. There were 71 survey respondents. This brief was made possible with the generous support of KnowledgeWorks and the Nevada Department of Education. For more information about KnowledgeWorks, please visit <https://knowledgeworks.org>.

Zweig, J., & Kennedy, K. (2026). Insights from the Nevada Future of Learning Network: Workforce Readiness. Retrieved from <https://www.nvfutureoflearning.org/jobs/evidence-based-one-page-briefs>.