



Nevada **Future of Learning** Network



CASE STUDY



Northeast Career and Technical Academy: Building a Student-Centered School Through Career Coaching and Mastery Learning

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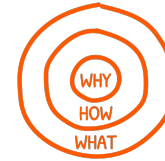
All Members of the Northeast Career and Technical Family Staff

What is your Design Challenge?

Context/Background

We had the opportunity to open a career and technical magnet high school in 2023. How would we create a student-centered school? How would we develop a school structure that allows every student to determine their own “why” for going to our school? How would we offer students ownership of their path, pace, and finish line? How would we develop structures that, over 720 days, ensure every student has access to a revenue-generation source based on their passion and abilities?

(Artifact #1: Accelerated and Extended Career Pacing Plan)



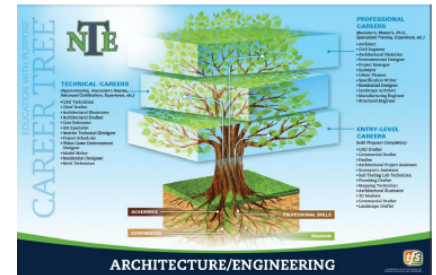
What did you do?

We started with Simon Sinek's Golden Circle and started with "Why."

Our "Why" is to shorten the timeline from ninth-grade orientation to personal revenue generation.

Our "How" is four different buckets.

First, we provide every student with four years of high-skill Career and Technical Education (CTE) training. While in CTE classes, students use Mark Perna's Career Tree as a career coaching framework every semester. Students review their passion, ability, and desired lifestyle to select their first professional revenue generation source. Every student on campus has a "leaf" on the CTE career tree with an explanation of their career aspirations (their why) and a practical plan for access.



Second, we use mastery-based blended learning in our core classes. Our core classes are not tied to the 180-day Carnegie Unit. Students own the pace for course completion and must demonstrate mastery of each unit before moving forward. Our students cannot fail their core classes; they continue to work until they demonstrate mastery of all information. Students may accelerate pace and finish a class in six months or extend a course for 18 months based on their individual needs. Each mastery unit contains a unit management timeline, teacher-created blended content and tasks, summative discourse with the teacher to verify learning, and finally, the application of skills through project-based learning. When a student completes all four unit components at mastery, they move on to the next unit at their own pace.

Flexible Learning Method	
Unit Overview	Direct Instruction
Foundation Skill Practice	Blended
Check for Understanding	Discourse
Apply Skills	Performance

Third, our elective teachers develop student emotional intelligence (EQ) through social-emotional learning (SEL) lessons. Elective teachers rotate responsibilities to ensure every student receives SEL lessons each month in support of developing their EQ.

Finally, we structure the school in supportive teams to ensure each student and family has an advocate structure over all four years. The student support team includes the CTE teacher, guidance counselor, and assistant principal. The teams are aligned vertically to ensure the students and their families have three consistent adults on campus over 720 days to support their academic and career success.

Our “Whats,” or our practical action steps, are numerous to name and evolve daily based on student needs, reflection, and data analysis.



What was the biggest surprise/barrier in implementation? What was the impact?

We opened our doors in August 2023 with 60 new staff members and 750 new students in grades nine and ten. Everyone on campus at Northeast Career and Technical Academy signed up for their idea. This year's biggest challenge was getting all stakeholders aligned with our Northeast way of doing school. A new learning model, a new culture, a new building, and 810 ideas of what “should” be done. The idea of starting a new school and innovation excited all of us. Implementing change and learning to work together took several months. To overcome this barrier, we leaned on all stakeholders. Our students, staff, families, and community members provided feedback about our progress, and we listened. Each month, our staff reviewed feedback and observations, dusted ourselves off, and tried different approaches to the work until we found our way. The students and families evolved and worked with us to develop our envisioned school. We opened our doors as strangers in August and ended our year as a family in May. There is only one “First Year,” and the moments from year one are special. We grew together through good times and stress. Our love for each other, focus on the vision, and grit brought us together. We are excited to start year two and welcome 500 more students and 30 new staff members.

A primary struggle was getting our students efficiently through a self-paced, mastery curriculum. Students mastered content, but generally at a slower pace than the traditional calendar. We partnered with The Modern Classroom Project (MCP) and Arizona State University Prep Digital for practical and leadership assistance. The use of MCP strategies in our classes in semester two improved performance and reduced frustration from both students and staff.



Artifact Grade Data from March 2024

	A, B, C	D, F	IP
Mastery Q1	93%	X	7%
Mastery Q2	80%	X	20%
Master Final Exam	59%	41%	X
Mastery Q3	50%	X	50%
Mastery Q4 Progress	29%	X	71%
AP Q1	69%	31%	X
AP Q2	62%	38%	X
AP Final Exam	36%	64%	X
AP Q3	59%	41%	X
AP Q4 Progress	45%	55%	X
Elective & CTE Q1	86%	14%	X
Elective & CTE Q2	79%	21%	X
Elective & CTE Final Exam	80%	20%	X
Elective & CTE Q3	79%	21%	X
Elective & CTE Q4 Progress	70%	30%	X

What was the greatest success? How did this success impact young people or how might it impact young people on your campus? What are their perceptions?

The greatest success of Northeast CTA is that we started from an idea in August 2023, and we finished with the proof of concept in May 2024. We came together as a family unit (students, staff, families, and community) to implement the vision of Northeast. Every student received career coaching at least twice and can explain their first job and how to gain access. Core teachers and all students used mastery-based blended learning for the first time. Students demonstrated exponential growth in their ability to communicate ideas and apply concepts verbally. Our school started with zero culture; through SEL units and school spirit activities, our students created a culture of love, support, and fun. The anecdotal success and growth are known by the first students and staff who lived it. Starting a school and innovating along the way was a special ride for all of us.

A quantitative data point to represent our success is the application numbers for the 2024-2025 school year. School choice is real, and our community talks. We received over 2,000 applications for 500 freshman seats. This data point underscores the value added to our community and the demand for schools like ours.

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	Total 01/16/24	Total 02/01/23
Northeast Career and Technical Academy	743	744	640	2127	1771
Architectural Design (60)	101	67	59	227	227
Automotive Technology (60)	106	67	7	231	179
Business Management (60)	93	112	7	310	268
Computer Science (30)	54	74	72	200	195
Construction Technology (30)	31	78	46	155	105
Cybersecurity (60)	62	81	65	208	156
Energy Technology (30)	18	24	29	71	66
Medical Professions (90?)	59	68	50	177	154
Human and Social Services (60?)	191	126	106	423	334
Teaching and Training (30)	28	47	50	125	87



What's next? How does your team plan to evolve this work? What are the most significant pieces of learning you see impacting adult work and young people's experiences? What school level, district level, state level policy may need to be addressed?

As adult learners, we are onboarding 30 new staff members. We will continue experimenting and refining how we most effectively provide career coaching, mastery-based blended learning, and EQ development. We keep pushing and solving problems so schools nationwide can copy our model.

What insights do you have about assessment? We evolved from traditional assessment to lean on discourse and skill application to demonstrate mastery. Is there still a need for quarter or semester exam grades in a mastery model? Is Carnegie still the most effective approach to measuring learning? We do not think so, and we look forward to sharing our approach with schools across the country.

[Artifact: Video Interview](#)

Research + Resources that inspired and informed our thinking

Working with the Nevada Department of Education and Portrait of a Learner team this year opened our eyes to all the innovation happening around us in the education sphere. We loved sharing ideas with thought partners from around the state. Leading innovation can feel lonely, and the Portrait Teams created a safe place to celebrate our work. This group pushed us to keep going.

A few of our inspirations and thought partners.

