

EDWorks: Advancing Educational Attainment, Career Exploration, and Workforce Development in Northeast Tennessee

EDWorks is a P20 collaboration in Northeast Tennessee that unites leaders from higher education, pre-K-12 school districts, and businesses and industries to advance educational attainment, career exploration, and workforce development with the larger goal of improving the lives of the people in this region. EDWorks serves the following nine counties: Carter, Greene, Hamblen, Hancock, Hawkins, Johnson, Sullivan, Unicoi, and Washington. P20 is a term that refers to the full educational spectrum from preschool to postsecondary education and to a career. P20 programs aim to make seamless transitions for students throughout preschool, elementary school, middle school, high school, and college so that students stay on an education path that moves them to a postsecondary degree or credential that prepares them for a career and participation in the workforce.

EDWorks' initial goals focus on increasing the college-going rate of high school students immediately following graduation to 65 percent by 2030, increasing the percentage of high school students graduating college-ready or with a workforce credential, and aligning educational coursework and outcomes with regional workforce needs and career pathways. Steps to reaching these goals include expanding dual enrollment opportunities, creating clearer pathways from the classroom to career credentials, and promoting more work-based learning, career exploration opportunities, and apprenticeships in the education system. Some other long-term goals include increasing enrollment in preschool programs, improving the literacy and proficiency levels of elementary school students, increasing the percentage of adults not directly out of high school who are entering or re-entering college, and increasing the college success, retention, and graduation rates in regional colleges and universities.

EDWorks aims to serve as a resource center that provides updated and comprehensive regional and state education and workforce data. One example is high school feedback reports which show high school administrators how their graduates are progressing in regional colleges. The resource center also compiles public data from state sources such as the Tennessee Higher Education Commission and the Tennessee Board of Regents. The resource center also highlights reports and articles relevant to the goals of EDWorks. Using this data, EDWorks will provide an analysis of current policies, such as Tennessee state policies related to post-secondary financial aid, and will advocate for changes when needed.

Most importantly, EDWorks promotes communication and collaboration across educational institutions of all levels, local businesses and industries, and the community so that we can work together to improve Northeast Tennessee. EDWorks is currently working directly through East Tennessee State University, but the collaboration is with all colleges and universities in the nine counties. By uniting all these groups, EDWorks will be able to identify problems in the education-to-career pathways and find solutions which will lead to greater educational attainment, career exploration, workforce development, and a better quality of life for the people of Northeast Tennessee.