



Fairfield County Educational Service Center

2025–2026 Fairfield County ESC BAC Annual Joint Statement

Fairfield County Educational Service Center Business Advisory Council

The Fairfield County Educational Service Center (FCESC) operates the countywide Business Advisory Council (BAC) on behalf of the following eight public school districts:

- Amanda-Clearcreek Local Schools
- Berne Union Local Schools
- Bloom Carroll Local Schools
- Fairfield Union Local Schools
- Lancaster City Schools
- Liberty Union-Thurston Local Schools
- Pickerington Local Schools
- Walnut Township Local Schools

The BAC will meet at least four times during the **2025–2026** school year and maintains documented agendas and minutes. Business representatives comprise more than 50% of council membership, ensuring the council remains business-led and workforce-focused.

Review of Workforce Data and Identification of Needs

During the **2025–2026** school year, the BAC formally reviewed the Area 20 Workforce Development Board in-demand occupations list and analyzed regional labor market projections, wage data, and industry growth sectors. Specific focus was placed on healthcare, skilled trades, and manufacturing, which represent the highest workforce demand in Fairfield County.

The BAC also reviewed:

- Graduation rate data for all eight public school districts
- OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal attainment data
- Industry credential participation
- Chronic absenteeism data and its workforce implications

Employer representatives identified persistent talent pipeline challenges including:



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- Reliable transportation barriers
- Chronic absenteeism and attendance reliability
- Soft skill gaps (communication, professionalism, dependability)
- Ongoing workforce shortages in healthcare, skilled trades, and advanced manufacturing

These findings directly informed council priorities and programming decisions.

Advisory Influence and Programmatic Response

Based on workforce data and employer input, the BAC implemented and expanded the following initiatives during **2025–2026**:

Career Readiness Expansion

- Established a goal of a 15% increase in students working toward the OhioMeansJobs Readiness Seal.
- Continued structured resume development, mock interviews, employer engagement, and career fairs.

Senior-Only Workforce Center Programming

- Developed and expanded senior-only pre-apprenticeship and credential programs aligned to industry demand, including carpentry, electrical, HVAC, water/wastewater management, phlebotomy, and manufacturing.

Advanced Manufacturing/STEM Career Navigation

- Expanded deployment of aptitude and interest assessments to better identify students for high-demand career pathways.
- Increased district participation in advanced manufacturing/STEM navigation services.

Transportation Barrier Mitigation

- Expanded the Fairfield County Driving Academy to address employer concerns regarding reliable transportation.
- Secured Drive to Succeed grant funding to offset costs for eligible students.
- Supported broader county efforts to expand transit services beyond the City of Lancaster.



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Attendance Intervention

- Collaborated with the ESC, Juvenile Court, ADAMH Board, and seven districts to implement intensive attendance case management to improve student reliability and workforce readiness behaviors.
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Student Impact

During the **2025–2026** school year, over **600 students** engaged in at least one BAC-supported initiative, including:

- Career Readiness programming and OhioMeansJobs Seal preparation
- Advanced Manufacturing/STEM career navigation
- Workforce Center pre-apprenticeship programs
- Career fairs and Career Signing Day
- Business presentations and employer tours
- Summer career exploration camps
- Driver's education programming

Participation has increased significantly during the 2025–2026 school year, particularly in drivers education, advanced manufacturing/STEM career navigation, and career readiness programming.

Business Engagement

Approximately **65 businesses actively engage** in BAC initiatives annually, with more than 100 additional employers supporting activities without formal council membership.

Business and industry partners contribute by:

- Hosting job shadowing and work-based learning placements
- Conducting mock interviews
- Participating in two countywide career fairs annually
- Teaching or co-teaching Workforce Center programs
- Participating in Career Signing Day



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- Providing direct input on curriculum alignment, credential relevance, and workforce skill expectations

Business representatives maintain majority membership on the council and provide ongoing advisory guidance aligned to regional workforce needs.

Work-Based Learning Coordination

The BAC prioritizes increasing access to work-based learning opportunities across all eight districts. Through coordinated Career Days, employer outreach, and structured employer engagement surveys, the council is developing a diversified employer network to expand placements and reduce over-reliance on a small group of partners.

Senior-only Workforce Center programs integrate structured work-based learning rotations, interviews, and direct hiring opportunities between February and April each year.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities

All BAC-supported initiatives are open to students with disabilities. The ESC collaborates with districts and Fairfield County Developmental Disabilities to ensure accommodations and equitable access to career exploration, credentialing, and work-based learning opportunities. Students with disabilities are included in Career Days, workforce programming, and Career Signing Day celebrations.

Summary

The Fairfield County ESC Business Advisory Council serves as a coordinated, business-led structure connecting education and industry across eight public school districts. Through formal workforce data review, employer engagement, and targeted program expansion, the BAC addresses identified regional needs in healthcare, manufacturing, and skilled trades while actively working to remove barriers such as transportation and attendance challenges.

The council remains committed to expanding student participation, strengthening work-based learning systems, and aligning educational programming with Fairfield County's labor market demands.