

Career Connections Conference: **The Path to Peak PERFORMANCE in CTE** June 16-17, 2025

Tinley Park Convention Center | Tinley Park, Illinois



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Pre-Conference Sessions

Setting Your Path to Peak Performance in CTE through New Teacher Mentoring and Induction Opportunities

Presenters: Dr. Erica Thieman, ISBE Director of CTE and Dr. Sebastian Kapala, Executive Director of Lake County Tech Campus

Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Description: This three-hour pre-conference is targeted for new CTE teachers or more seasoned CTE educators and administrators wanting to learn more about how to support and mentor new CTE teachers. During this pre-conference attendees will receive best practices and training related specifically to being a new CTE teacher reaching for peak performance and professional growth. A breakout session for the new/novice CTE teachers will focus on critical issues for new teachers, including preparations for the first two weeks of school that will set you up for success. A breakout session for the experienced educator and administrators will focus on mentoring and induction strategies to reduce attrition of early career teachers. Attendees will develop a network of similar CTE professionals that will be supported through two in-person training opportunities (2025 Connections Conference and 2026 IACTE Conference), along with monthly online professional learning sessions to support you throughout the school year.

Cost: \$25.00

Work-based Learning Renewal Course: Updates and Best Practices for Illinois Educators

Presenters: Abbi Barton, ISBE CTE Principal Consultant and Bill Rose, NIU Illinois CTE Project

Time: 10:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Description: This free, day long pre-conference course is tailored for educators who previously completed Cooperative Education coursework and are now eager to explore key concepts from the updated Illinois Work-based Learning (WBL) Manual as it aligns with Perkins V. This session will include updated best practices for WBL, practical tools and resources for enhancing WBL initiatives, strategies for overcoming common challenges in WBL programs as well as provide non-regulatory guidance and points of consideration when implementing a WBL program. The goal is to ensure that educators are well-equipped to provide high-quality, impactful WBL experiences for their students.

Educators attending this course will receive a free copy of the updated WBL manual. Completion of the course will require participants to provide input and feedback on the session and a plan detailing how they will implement the newly learned topics into their WBL program. Feedback and the implementation plan are due two weeks after the conference.

Upon successful completion, participants will receive a renewal notation on their WBL designation. This renewal notation ensures educators stay current with WBL standards and meet ISBE's five-year WBL renewal requirement.

This session will guide final development of the WBL renewal program that will be used to train all regional EFEs and/or their designees. The goal is to build local capacity and enhance the EFEs ability to offer this course locally.

Limited to 50 participants on a first come, first serve basis.

Cost: Free

Education's AI Renaissance: Empowering Teachers and Equipping Students for the Future

Presenter: Matt Sherrill, Learning Technology Center

Time: 1:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Description: In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the way we live, work, and teach. Like it or not, AI is here to stay. However, as disruptive as this technology can be for education, it may also be the boon educators have been waiting for. This pre-conference workshop provides educators with the knowledge and skills to effectively and ethically integrate AI tools into their teacher workflow, as well as helpful resources to begin building responsible, future-ready students. Participants will gain a foundational understanding of AI literacy, explore various AI tools to boost their efficiency, and learn how to easily incorporate AI literacy concepts into their curriculum. Through hands-on activities and interactive discussions, educators will discover how AI can enhance teaching and learning while preparing students to navigate an increasingly AI-influenced world safely, responsibly, and ethically.

Cost: \$25.00