

# How Elko County School District Transformed Work-Based Learning with SchoolLinks

schoolinks 



SCHOOLINKS.COM

## Elko County School District

Nestled in the vast landscapes of Nevada, Elko County School District serves approximately 10,000 students across grades K-12, with 3,000 students participating in Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. Known as the fourth largest geographic county in the U.S., Elko County boasts a unique characteristic—three cows for every human!

Heather Steele, CTE Facilitator and Work-Based Learning Coordinator for the district, has been instrumental in pioneering a shift in how Elko County manages and expands career readiness opportunities. Through the adoption of SchoolLinks, the district has revolutionized how students access, track, and engage with work-based learning experiences.

## Addressing the Challenges of Work-Based Learning

In 2020, work-based learning became a priority for Nevada's CTE programs, but Elko County faced significant challenges in tracking student experiences and reporting them to the state. Before SchoolLinks, the district relied on paper applications and Google Forms, making data collection cumbersome and inefficient.

Heather explains, "One of the biggest hurdles was figuring out how to track students' experiences and turn around and report them to the state. Initially, I was just looking for a solution to manage our work-based learning opportunities."

By implementing SchoolLinks, the district was able to centralize student work-based learning data, streamline communication with industry partners, and enhance tracking and reporting for compliance with state requirements.

## A Remarkable Growth in Student Engagement

"When we started in 2020, we had zero work-based learning experiences for students. Thanks to SchoolLinks, we've grown to over 743 experiences in just a few years. It has completely transformed how we provide career opportunities."



When Elko County first implemented SchoolLinks in 2020-2021, they had zero work-based learning experiences recorded for students. Over the past three years, the impact has been extraordinary. “We have since grown from zero work-based learning opportunities in 2020 to 743 experiences in 2024,” Heather shares. “SchoolLinks has played a key role in helping us provide more opportunities and ensure students are aware of them.”

The transformation didn’t stop there. Work-based learning has become a district-wide initiative, extending beyond CTE programs and becoming a key performance indicator for the district as a whole.

## From Paper to Digital: A Seamless Transition

Prior to SchoolLinks, teachers manually filled out Google Forms to track student experiences, and Heather had to consolidate the data for state reporting—an arduous process prone to errors.

Now, students can report their own experiences, and teachers can track student engagement in one platform. This shift has not only alleviated administrative burdens but has also improved the accuracy and efficiency of work-based learning tracking.

Heather notes, “SchoolLinks eliminated so many extra steps. Before, I had to pull data from different reports, compile it, and submit it. Now, students and teachers input their data directly into the system, making the process seamless.”

“Before SchoolLinks, tracking work-based learning was a nightmare—we relied on paper applications and Google Forms. Now, students and teachers can input everything directly, saving hours of time and ensuring accurate reporting to the state.”

Additionally, Elko County has expanded the use of SchoolLinks beyond traditional CTE programs—special education students now use the platform for transition services, further integrating career readiness across the district.

## Defining Work-Based Learning for All Students

Work-based learning in Nevada is not just for CTE students—it is a priority for all students. The district’s strategy includes:

- Career fairs and guest speakers
- Industry tours and job shadowing
- School-based enterprises providing services to the community
- Supervised agricultural experiences
- Pre-apprenticeships and clinical experiences
- CTE work experience for credit
- Employer-led project-based learning

A standout example includes multimedia students partnering with a local mining company to design advertising materials for a regional publication, giving students real-world experience in branding and marketing.

“Work-based learning has become so essential in Elko County that our district now includes it as a key performance indicator. SchoolLinks has helped us take this from a CTE focus to a district-wide initiative for all students.”

## Looking to the Future

Heather and the team at Elko County are excited to continue growing their work-based learning initiatives. SchoolLinks has not only transformed how the district tracks and reports student experiences but has also created new opportunities for students to explore careers in a structured, meaningful way.

“Bringing SchoolLinks into our district wasn’t just about tracking work-based learning,” Heather states. “It was about giving students real career exploration tools and preparing them for life beyond high school.”

Elko County’s success story is a testament to how SchoolLinks is helping districts modernize career readiness programs, streamline reporting, and provide students with engaging, real-world experiences.

**“SchoolLinks isn’t just a tracking tool—it’s a platform that puts real career exploration in students’ hands. It’s helping students understand their options and giving teachers the tools they need to support them effectively.”**

## Request a Demo



SCHOOLINKS.COM