

Richard Portelance from EdGate discusses the importance of data in career planning and the need for a lifelong learning repository to support modern with better integrations of profile details. Identifying the fractured nature of current career tools and the necessity for better visualization of career pathways, Richard highlights the role of educational standards and AI's potential with machine learning to map career pathways efficiently, empowering both learners and advisors.

Voices of Excellence on Episode 52



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Transcript of Episode 52

[Opening Jingle and Music]

Richard: Right now, it feels like we are at the cusp allowing wonder to flourish. As Socrates said, wisdom begins in wonder. Let's work together so that wonder-power is the future of career exploration.

Jasen: Discover how AI and lifelong learning are transforming career pathways and guidance counseling as Richard Portelance joins us on episode 52.

[Jingle] Let's get Ready for Work!

Jasen: Hello this is Jasen Jones, your host, and welcome. ACT is passionate about career navigation and how we equip working learners with the tools to empower decision making and set life-changing pathways. Richard Portelance gave an inspiring FRED Talk at the ACT Workforce Summit in Nashville. Discover the importance of curiosity and innovation in career planning that

drive alternative pathways to success. Richard offers insights to reshape how users navigate pathways and build skills for an ever-evolving job landscape.

Richard: As Fred said, my name is Richard Portland and I'm from EdGate. And I'll tell you a little bit more about that as we get along. I'm going to talk about a super exciting topic, data. I hope you all are ready!

Over nine years ago, I founded Career Path Mobile, a company whose stated goal was to improve learner engagement and career planning and facilitate that process. Prior to that, I helped create a student engagement application at Bell Praise, the law school. And what we saw was a 105 to 185% increase in career center utilization in one year's time. So, I have some background in data.

My interest in aiding young people find career focus began about 16 years ago, while I was working as a student advisor and coach. The mentoring ignited what had been a dormant desire to help students translate their interests and skills into life. Success. This awakening in my professional life was partially driven by a personal struggle to find my own path, something I imagine many here can relate to.

The Greek philosopher Socrates said, among other things, that wisdom begins in wonder, which I believe is an awesome place to begin career exploration as opposed to the typical dread we have all seen on the faces of the young people that we have advised until now. Career finding tools have been produced for narrow life stages.

So, we have high school, we have Navient, and we have the active work ready program. We have college simplicity and now we have handshake, coming forward, or in a career, LinkedIn, Monster, CareerBuilder, Indeed, etc. In workforce, we have career one stop, workforce VR and others. However, the market is highly fractured. Some data, some of these products don't address the advisors.

They're a little carryover from one state to another. And I think we can all agree. Modern career pathways require a lifelong learning repository that preserves and integrates essential profile information to assist users in making the best choice for their personal success. Here's another challenge new careers are constantly being invented and advanced. Manufacturing and cybersecurity at your local dentist's office and in construction, to name just a few.

The question is, how do learners discover these cool new jobs? And how do advisors and guidance counselors learn enough to assist them? Many of these new careers don't require a college degree and can be achieved by alternate pathways such as certificate courses, military or workforce training. For years, we were all told that college was the best answer and in many cases it worked.

But often we see graduates with uncertain futures. So increasingly we are learning that alternate pathways certainly have their place, and many learners and career changers are opting not to go to college because of the expense, or simply because they would prefer to get into the careers quicker.

So to do this, we need a better way to visualize these pathways, a way that automates the process so new careers can be added quickly and efficiently in a way that considers both the learner and the advisor.

Not only do we need to support all the learners across life events and provide them the agency to self-advocate, one core tool for life, but we also must support and inform guidance counselors

and advisors so that they can feel empowered to aid learners in making quality decisions that are well informed and fundamentally sound. So, the big question on the board is how can we do this?

So, to begin, let's consider that our common data points that carry over from one life event to another. We've got skills. We've got grades, and we've got documented experiences. These are all good, and they're all grounded in data and categorization, but they're not enough. Somewhat ironically, a data source that has gone virtually untapped and under the radar for many years may turn out to be one of the best resources to bridge the gaps that we see.

What if we had a way to provide guidance counselors and advisors with enough information to allow them to feel empowered, to counsel learners on courses, to take skills to acquire pathway options and financial considerations? So, the standards movement began when a book, *A Nation at Risk*, was published in 1983. It described how American educational system was failing to educate students well.

As educational reform took shape, education standards were adopted to level the playing field for all learners. Now there's plenty of controversy surrounding the effectiveness of academic standards and testing, but there is another use for them that may outstrip the originally intended purpose. Today, there are literally millions of standards for education and CTE that have all been created for every grade level subject, both on a national level as well as on state-by-state basis, and for almost every career type and job imaginable.

As a matter of fact, there are nearly seven CTE standards to every one education standard. The challenge is how to harness these standards and their embedded data to improve learner outcomes and career pathways. So, what are these standards made up of a standard are essentially a description of the knowledge and a list of the skills an individual should acquire and show competency in, to either complete a course or be successful in a job.

As I mentioned before, skilled databases already exist. Now, by connecting a person to the completion of a set of courses using the associated standard as a baseline, we can extrapolate a more precise skill profile from that coursework. Likewise, understanding the specific job skill requirements for a corresponding CTE standard, we can map a person's progress towards that career, where there is a gap.

We then recommend various training options to garner the required skills. All types of regional and national options can be mapped to provide the learners with myriad pathways to choose from. Any number of maps can be created just like in Google Maps, a learner can stay local or they can explore nationally. This personalized approach is also unique in that it can be utilized at any point in the learning continuum, from high schoolers through career changers. Anyone can benefit from journey mapping.

So, the team at Ed Gate has been in the business. Of these standards for over 26 years. And during that time, we've amassed the world's largest repository of standards, with over 8 million entries, and 5 million of those are refined with metadata and mapped to skills. Along with our standards repository, educators developed a proprietary taxonomy in Quarter Corp rating six U.S. patents, allowing us to allow these standards to any type of curriculum, ensuring compliance to their and to the requirements.

Using the same patented technology, we have created the world's first pathfinding tool, utilizing standards as a core data set journeys map. Just like your favorite GPS mapping tool, Journeys Map utilizes a learner's education and interest to create an as is profile one stats starting point is

created. Any type of pathway can be mapped because and E standards lack uniformity, and they have little commonality between state and national requirements.

Job titles, skill profiles has been nearly impossible to map them, with the speed required to make pathfinding possible. That is, until the advent of machine learning and AI. Utilizing these technologies has allowed us to begin to map the many sets of standards as accurately as if done by hand, at a pace that will allow the system to keep up with the constant changes and additions taking place.

So, these types of advancements in technology are making it possible to map millions of CTE standards and make matching their skill profiles to any academic standard imaginable. This will allow advisors and guidance counselors in any state to better understand the job landscape and map pathways with their learners. Access to data is transforming career pathways. This data also allows learners to gain the agency, which is an important word, gain the agency.

They need to be able to develop the process for career change that is vital in today's world, where the average person will have 12 plus jobs in their lifetime. There's certainly always more, more that we can do, but right now it feels like we're on the cusp of allowing wonder to flourish. Because the tools are coming to the fore that enable access to the knowledge required to keep pace with change.

So, as Socrates said, wisdom begins in wonder. Let's work together so that wonder powers the future of career exploration. Thank you very much.

Jasen: We were thrilled with the opportunity to include Richard's FRED Talk in our podcast toolbox on Career Navigation. Hear more on this important topic with [Georgia Gillette at Opportunity at Work in episode 45](#), [Credential Engine's Scott Cheney in episode 40](#), or [Mary Hayes from WorkBay in episode 39](#).

This wraps up our series of podcasts with the FRED Talkers from the ACT Workforce Summit in Nashville. Our next stop for the Summit is the vibrant and friendly Mid Town section of Atlanta in October. See the full lineup and register online at [act dot org slash workforce summit](#).

[Podcast Closing and Jingle] Thanks for listening to the Ready for Work podcast from your friends at A C T. Join us at [Work Ready Communities dot org](#) as we link, level up, and leverage for workforce ecosystem prosperity. Subscribe today in your favorite app and check out our full library at [A C T dot org, slash, ready for work podcast](#) for past episodes, show notes, resources, and much more.