

Written Testimony of Nikki Nix, Ed.D.

Chief Academic Officer

Godley Independent School District (Godley, Texas)

Before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Small Business

“Career and Technical Education: Developing the Future of Main Street Success”

February 24, 2026

Chairman Williams, Ranking Member Velázquez, and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the critical connection between Career and Technical Education (CTE) and the future of our nation’s workforce.

My name is Dr. Nikki Nix, and I serve as Chief Academic Officer for Godley Independent School District in Texas. I assumed this role in 2026 after serving as Chief Readiness Officer in 2025 and Director of Career and Technical Education beginning in 2022.

I earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Business Computer Information Systems from Midwestern State University, a master’s degree in educational technology leadership from Lamar University, and completed my Doctor of Education degree at Arkansas State University in December 2023.

With more than 20 years in public education, I began my career in Wichita Falls as a business and audio/video teacher at Rider High School. I later taught business and audio/video courses in Burleson ISD, served as a dual enrollment instructor with Hill College, worked as an academic advisor at Lake Dallas High School, and became CTE coordinator for Grand Prairie ISD. Prior to joining Godley ISD, I served as CTE director and oversaw The MILE, an innovative secondary campus in Midlothian ISD.

I also serve on the board of directors for the Godley Chamber of Commerce and am a member of the Godley Lions Club, reinforcing my belief that education and local business must work hand in hand.

Overview of Godley ISD

Godley ISD covers more than 122 square miles, primarily in Johnson County, with small areas extending into Hood and Tarrant counties. We are located just southwest of Fort Worth along the Chisholm Trail Parkway.

Our district serves approximately 3,300 students across six campuses and is one of the fastest-growing school districts in our region. The Godley community is largely rural and

residential, supported by small businesses and retail, with limited large-scale industry. That reality makes intentional workforce development partnerships even more essential.

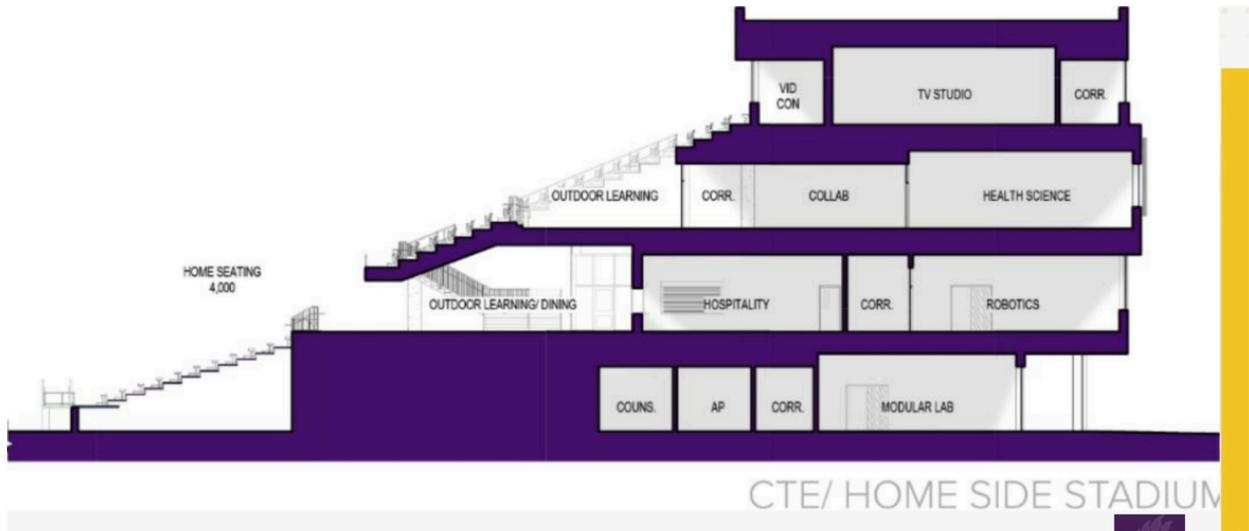
We offer Career and Technical Education programs at both Godley High School and Godley Middle School, ensuring that career exploration begins early and pathways are intentional.

The WILD: Redefining Workforce Preparation

In April 2024, we opened The WILD — the Wildcat Innovative Learning Destination — a four-story Career and Technical Education center at Godley High School. Intentionally designed to dual purpose space and save taxpayer money, The WILD combines a traditional football stadium with 77,000 sq feet of academic learning space. From the highway, it may resemble a stadium. In reality, it is a launchpad for student readiness and workforce development.



The building functions as academic space all day, every day and dual purposes for event or game space after hours. The WILD houses more than 40 classrooms, labs, collaboration spaces, and student-run enterprises designed to mirror professional environments.



Collaboration spaces for student learning during the school day, double as traditional press box spaces on game night. In utilizing the structural design of the building to support event seating and dual-purposing academic learning spaces, the district saved local taxpayers an estimated \$55 million dollars.



Our programs blend rigorous academics with hands-on, real-world learning aligned to industry standards. Student readiness is a cornerstone of Godley ISD's Community-Based Accountability System. Through CTE, students graduate prepared for college, careers, military service, or immediate entry into the workforce. They develop technical skills alongside communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and professionalism — the skills employers consistently identify as essential.

Since opening The WILD, we have seen increased student enrollment in CTE programs. Students are drawn to authentic labs, real-world equipment, and coursework that leads to tangible credentials and career opportunities.

Texas provides weighted state funding for students enrolled in CTE courses, which is critical in sustaining high-quality programs.

However, local funding capacity remains a challenge. In fast-growth communities like ours, increases in the state homestead exemption limit local revenue growth. This directly affects our ability to expand facilities and meet the demand students have for high-quality workforce programs.



Programs of Study

Our programs of study include:

- Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources (agribusiness, animal science, applied agriculture engineering, plant science)
- Arts, AV Technology & Communications (digital communications, graphic design & multimedia arts)
- Business, Marketing & Finance (entrepreneurship)
- Education & Training (teaching & training)
- Health Science (exercise & wellness, healthcare therapeutic)
- Human Services (family & community services)
- Information Technology (IT support & services)
- Engineering (drone- unmanned vehicle)



Future added programming could include Culinary Arts, eSports/Gaming & Coding, Construction Trades and JROTC. These programs are driven by local work-force demand and student interest.

Industry-Based Certifications

Students can earn industry-based certifications after passing rigorous exams. Current certifications include:

- Adobe Certified Professional (multiple design pathways)
- American Welding Society D 9.1 (Sheet Metal)
- CompTIA IT Fundamentals (ITF+)
- Educational Aide I
- Elanco animal science certifications
- Emergency Medical Technician – Basic
- Entrepreneurship & Small Business
- FAA Part 107 Drone Pilot
- Patient Care Technician
- Texas State Florists Association certification



These credentials provide measurable workforce value before students ever graduate high school.

Career and Technical Student Organizations

Our students engage in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs), including:

- FFA - Future Farmers of America
- Godley Squadron (Drone)
- HOSA - Future Health Professionals
- Robotics
- TAFE - Texas Association of Future Educators
- TSA - Technology Student Association
- Wildcat Media



These organizations build leadership, entrepreneurship, and real-world skills aligned with small business and workforce needs.

Internships and Workforce Pipeline

Through intentional partnerships with local businesses and industry professionals, we provide internships during high school. Some students secure employment immediately after graduation with the same businesses that mentored them; however, due to our local economy being supported mostly by small businesses, it is sometimes difficult to find local internship placements for all of our students. Small businesses often do not have the budget to house multiple interns or apprentices but could greatly benefit from additional labor.

Local professionals and our commuter residents, serve as mentors, guest speakers, mock interviewers, and subject-matter experts. In a largely residential community, relationships with our commuter professionals are vital to building a workforce pipeline and providing connections to our students to industry.

We were honored to host Chairman Roger Williams at The WILD last August to showcase these efforts and highlight how federal policy intersects with local innovation.

Student-Run Enterprises: Small Business in Action

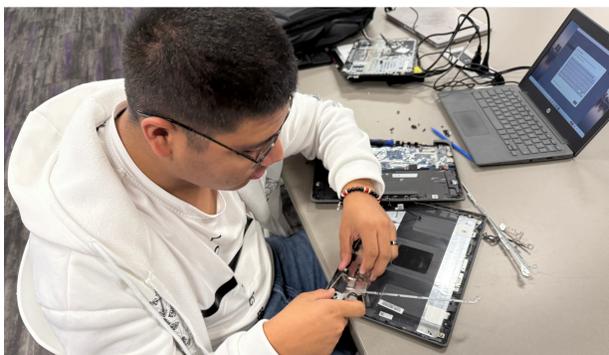
Our students do not just study entrepreneurship — they operate businesses. One way Godley ISD has been intentional in providing real-world work experience is by creating student-run enterprises. These internal small businesses provide students with the opportunity to interface with our community through their enterprise and in turn, provide additional services and retail opportunities to our community.

Shop The WILD, our school store, is a fully student-run enterprise where entrepreneurship students manage every aspect of the business while selling apparel and spirit items. Shop The WILD also serves as the point of sale for other programs within the facility like drone students hired to film aerial footage of properties for local real estate agents or welding students building custom projects for community members. Using real data to guide decisions and track trends, students experience the full business cycle—launching products, managing customers, and applying classroom lessons in finance and marketing—while building school pride and career-ready skills in leadership, collaboration, and problem-solving.



Wild Blooms, our floral design shop, opens to the public during high-demand events like Homecoming and Valentine's Day, turning the classroom into a working retail business. Students design custom arrangements, manage orders, set pricing, market products, and provide customer service while working under real deadlines. Through serving authentic customers and generating revenue, students gain hands-on experience in design, budgeting, and operations while building confidence and professional skills.

iLEAD, our Information Technology program, supports and services student technology devices across the district. As a one-to-the-world district with more than 3,000 Chromebooks in students' hands as daily learning tools, device repair is an ongoing and essential need. Through this student-led



enterprise, we were able to bring those repairs in-house—eliminating costly outsourcing fees while providing students with authentic, hands-on experience. Students manage the full repair cycle: intake, troubleshooting, diagnostics, repair, invoicing, and returning devices to their campus. This model saves the district more annually in repair costs than the salary of the teacher who leads the program, while delivering real-world learning experiences that are truly invaluable.

These enterprises teach budgeting, customer service, marketing, compliance, and operational logistics — authentic small business skills that cannot be replicated through simulation alone.

Ways You Can Make an Impact

The House Committee on Small Business on Small Business can play a pivotal role in strengthening Career and Technical Education (CTE) by aligning federal policy with workforce development and small business growth. Key actions could include:

- Create **tax incentives or direct funding** for small businesses that hire high school interns and/or registered apprentices, helping offset training and supervision costs.
- **Incentives for local and regional economic development organizations** to formally partner with public schools in building workforce-ready talent pipelines that attract new business and industry, specifically to rural, fast-growth communities like Godley, Texas.
- Public school salaries are not competitive with industry salaries making it extremely difficult to recruit highly-qualified teachers with industry experience. Designate additional funding that **supplement—not supplant—local salary schedules** to make CTE teacher pay more competitive with industry standards, enabling schools to recruit professionals with real-world experience.
- Prohibit unfunded state and federal mandates on public schools and require states to increase annual K–12 funding at a minimum of a rate equal to or greater than inflation to ensure sustainable program growth and workforce alignment.
- Restrict state actions that reduce or undermine local funding mechanisms—particularly those that limit bonding capacity for fast-growth districts—such as excessive increases to homestead exemptions that erode districts’ ability to finance facilities and CTE infrastructure.

Strategic federal action in these areas would strengthen public education while directly supporting small business development and long-term economic competitiveness.

Conclusion

Career and Technical Education is no longer an alternative pathway. It is an essential strategy for economic growth and small business sustainability.

When students graduate with certifications, real-world experience, and professional skills, they strengthen local economies, fill workforce gaps, and, in many cases, become entrepreneurs themselves.

At Godley ISD, we believe education should launch students into opportunity. The WILD is one example of how local school districts, supported by thoughtful state and federal policy, can align education with workforce needs.

Thank you for your time and for your commitment to strengthening the connection between education and small business across this nation.

I look forward to answering your questions.