



# **Putting Young Americans On The Road**

HOW SCHOOLS CAN LEAD THE  
WAY IN ADDRESSING THE NATION'S  
TRUCK DRIVER SHORTAGE



**Across the country, school districts are discovering an exciting and impactful opportunity: Preparing young people for fulfilling careers in trucking. This growing trend presents a unique blend of benefits that's hard to overlook:**

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- ▶ A course that students love, and can't wait to attend.
- ▶ Classes that not only teach technical skills but also provide valuable business knowledge, applicable across a variety of career fields.
- ▶ A skill set that opens doors to immediate, well-paying job opportunities.
- ▶ An accessible career path right after high school - either as a full-time career or a way to fund college education.
- ▶ Entry into an industry with a high demand for skilled workers and an excellent job placement rate.
- ▶ And finally, a class that makes its instructor one of the most popular teachers in the school.



**A skill set**  
that opens doors to immediate,  
well-paying job opportunities.

### **This is the reality...**

**...in more than 50 school districts, thanks to a partnership with the nonprofit, Next Generation in Trucking (Next Gen). Through this collaboration, school districts are offering Commercial Driver's License (CDL) trucking courses that connect students with opportunities in one of the most in-demand industries in the country.**



# THE TEAM AND THE VISION

**Next Gen's** story began when **two visionary leaders** met at a **trucking conference**, both recognizing the industry's critical **need for drivers** and the untapped **potential of young people** eager to step into this field. What followed was the creation of a program that combines market demand, available resources, and a shared vision to give students the **skills they need to succeed**.

## **This was the mission – and the vision – that drove the partnership of Lindsey Trent and Dave Dein.**

**Trent**, a Louisville-based trucking professional and business development manager for Ryder System Inc., was deeply concerned about the industry's struggle to attract new drivers.



**Lindsey Trent**  
President & Co-Founder

**Dein**, a teacher in the Patterson (California) School District with a background in truck driving, had a transformative realization about his purpose in life – to help people. For 10 summers, he ran a private initiative called Faith Logistics, teaching truck-driving skills to ex-convicts, a passion that deeply shaped his approach.



**Dave Dein**  
Vice President & Co-Founder

### **So when Trent and Dein ...**

**... were introduced in 2020 by a mutual colleague, they quickly recognized the potential of a powerful partnership. The goal was clear: Develop a curriculum and offer it to as many school districts as possible across the United States. Since by this time Dein was already teaching a CDL program at Patterson High School, it wasn't a stretch to design the program or to show the way to implementation.**



# The Growing Demand for Truck Drivers



**The trucking industry is facing a severe shortage of drivers – currently, the American Trucking Associations is reporting a deficit of 60,000 drivers – and ATA predicts the driver shortage will grow to 160,000 by 2030.**

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The job search firm Glass Door lists nearly 175,000 truck driving positions available in the United States as of January 2025, with many offering hourly wages near \$40 and requiring no prior experience.

**The opportunity is very clear.**

The challenge lies in connecting the young prospects to the industry and providing them with the necessary training. The ideal place to do this would be where the students already are – in their own local schools.

**ATA predicts**

**160,000  
driver shortage  
by 2030.**



A semi-truck is shown from the front, with its headlights on, against a bright sunset background. The truck is dark, and the sun is a large, glowing orb behind it, creating a silhouette effect.

# Patterson, California: The Maiden Voyage

**The Patterson program began in 2017. To date, 27 students who have gone through Dein's program have earned their CDLs, with another 30 students waiting for milestones like their 18th birthdays before they can graduate.**

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When the program first began, many of Dein's colleagues doubted its potential, viewing the truck-driving class as a place for academic underachievers or troublemakers. But the success of the program proved them wrong

**“It was amazing because we created an environment that didn't judge them,” Dein said. “We created an environment that empowered them. I had zero discipline issues that year. People showed up on time. They didn't cut my class. They would tell me they're cutting their other classes, but they're not going to cut truck driving. They're going to be at school every day.”**

The program has been transformative for entire families. One student successfully completed the program and found a good employment opportunity that his father said kept him away from gang activity and self-destructive behavior. A few years later, his younger brother enrolled in the program and went on to earn \$106,000 a year as a driver for Walmart.

**“Now his parents are able to retire,” Dein said. “His mom has some health issues, and he's able to take care of his family. It's just a beautiful story. If you think about it, you don't just change a life. You change a generation.”**

Every year, the class fills up, and an increasing number of female students are enrolling as well.

## **This success ...**

**... gave Dein and Trent a strong foundation to help other school districts build their own trucking programs, using the Patterson curriculum as their model.**



# Next Generation in Trucking: Taking the Concept National

**Next Gen is not just helping schools implement the programs, it's driving a national movement to address the trucking industry's talent shortage.**

By providing guidance on program creation and connecting schools with funding opportunities - including federal and state grants - Next Gen is paving the way for students to build successful careers in trucking.

**The timing ...**  
... couldn't be better, as it coincided with a growing interest in skilled trade programs.

**“We see a shift happening of people not wanting to go to college and get student loan debt,” Trent said. “So we are wanting to provide opportunities for young people to get into trucking. A lot of schools have welding programs, culinary, HVAC. We want more trucking programs.”**

When Next Gen launched, only 10 high school trucking programs existed nationwide — three of them in Maine. Today, that number has grown to 50, thanks to Next Gen's efforts and the overwhelming support of school officials across the country — far exceeding Trent's expectations.







**“ I was surprised at how receptive schools were about starting trucking programs,” Trent said. “I think, from the pandemic, they learned about the supply chain and what happened when trucks stopped. They saw the need and value and learned about the shortage, and then said, hey, we want to be a part of this solution. We want to provide good opportunities for our students. And in rural and urban settings, there are trucking jobs. And so why not start these programs in high schools?”**

It is common for Next Gen and its partner schools to collaborate with community colleges and private institutions to facilitate behind-the-wheel training. In some cases, these institutions provide all the training, while in others, high schools and their instructors take the lead.

And as Next Gen has continued to work with educators across the country, the organization has learned how to better define what these programs will do.

“We’ve also widened our focus to be in four verticals, which is working with high schools to start CDL programs, supply chain management programs, diesel mechanic programs and then warehousing and logistics programs,” Trent said. “We are actively providing career training for the trucking industry by engaging with students, schools and educational influencers to highlight the exciting opportunities in trucking. Additionally, we support high schools in establishing career and technical education programs that span two to four years, equipping students with the skills and knowledge they need while they’re still in high school.”



**As Next Gen continues to prove its effectiveness, it has gained strong backing from the trucking industry - with major sponsors like Knorr-Bremse Global Care North America, C.H. Robinson, Performance Food Group, XPO, ACT 1, DHL, and the Trucking Cares Foundation, recognizing its impact and investing in its mission.**

## Next Gen is focused on eight key priorities, including:

- ▶ BUILD and STRENGTHEN high school CDL truck driver, diesel tech and supply chain logistics programs throughout North America.
- ▶ PROMOTE trucking as a positive career choice.
- ▶ EDUCATE high school administration, teachers, counselors, students and parents on the benefits and opportunities in the trucking industry.
- ▶ LOBBY for the Safe Driver Apprenticeship Pilot Program (SDAP) and Trucking in Career Technical Education (CTE).
- ▶ PROVIDE updated educational resources and curriculum to create a new wave of CDL drivers, technicians and supply chain professionals who are trained to the highest standards.
- ▶ FOCUS on diversity, equity and inclusion.
- ▶ CELEBRATE success, foster community for young people in trucking and recognize accomplishments
- ▶ CONNECT and SERVE as a liaison between schools and trucking partners to provide a pipeline of talented, trained drivers, technicians and supply chain logistics professionals.

### The SDAP program ...

... mentioned above and established by the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, allows 18- to 20-year-olds in the program a special exemption to cross state lines – making them more viable as drivers for the industry.

Next Gen represents a broad and far-reaching effort to create an influx of young, new talent into an industry that sorely needs it – and offers a great many rewards for those who choose to become part of it.



# Case Study 1:


*Connell High School  
Connell, Washington*

**Connell High School**, part of the North Franklin School District in the state of Washington, worked with **Next Gen in 2022** to kick off

its **CDL program for seniors**. Taking advantage of state grant funding and partnerships with local agencies and organizations, Connell launched a program that is **cost-free** to students and highly sought after.

Since its launch, the program inspired four nearby Washington school districts to offer similar programs – Othello, Kiona Benton, Finley and Columbia.

Charlie Dansie, the program's instructor from the beginning, was the driving force behind the initiative. He was also the one who brought the idea to leaders at Connell High School and the North Franklin district. His idea was sparked by a conversation with his wife's uncle, a farmer who owned a sod business.

 *My wife's uncle is named Nelson Coggs," Dansie said. "He has a farm and he and his sons run a sod business. And he came up to me when I was teaching at a different school and said, 'Why don't you teach kids something they can use? I've got a load of sod that has to go to Seattle but I don't have a driver. They just have to be 18 and they can drive within the state."*

Dansie loved the idea and was inspired, so he reached out to his contacts at the Washington Potato Commission who helped him rally support from key state legislators.

While local support was strong, in Olympia, he had some work to do.

*"The only pushback we got was from the state, and that was a challenge," Dansie said. "They had all kinds of excuses. 'How do we insure that kind of program? How are you going to finish? When are you going to drive with them?' They just kept making excuses of why we couldn't do it."*

But North Franklin Superintendent Jim Jacobs knew the local students needed a program like this, and he wasn't going to let the recalcitrance of state officials deny them of it.

*"He said, 'I don't care if you're going to support this or not, we're going to do it at the local level," Dansie recalled of Jacobs. "And a few weeks later, I got an email saying we were going to be approved."*



Today the program has more than **40 students enrolled**, having **grown** from **30** the first year.

The number of class sessions has also increased from one to two. Many graduates who have already completed the program have **secured employment as drivers**, including one who decided to skip college because he had an offer to earn **\$60,000** hauling apples. Several others have been hired by local counties for snow removal and dump truck work.



*"Our community is a lot of Hispanic kids and their parents work in the fields," Dansie said. "They don't want to go back to the fields, but they don't necessarily want to go to college. Truck driving gives them hope that if they can get their CDL and be a truck driver, they can support their family – and that's their dream."*

Dansie credits Next Gen Trucking's support with the program's success, particularly the curriculum and structure they provided.

**“***I had the framework,” Dansie said. “I kind of knew what I wanted to teach. But I hadn’t come up with anything as complete as the curriculum they had created – such as the simulators to teach them how to shift, and how to back up with golf carts. So why reinvent the wheel?”*

**40 students enrolled**  
having grown from  
**30** the first year



# Case Study 2:

*Parke Heritage High School  
Rockport, Indiana*

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**The CDL program at Parke Heritage High School is now in its third year of being led by teacher Kelly Rollings – a former over-the-road truck driver. According to school principal Bruce Patton, the combination of Next Gen’s support and the community’s readiness for the program – along with some critical assistance along the way – has resulted in a program that’s popular and benefits everyone involved with it.**



*Once we got a 3E grant from the state, that got the ball rolling because we were able to fund it to start,” Patton said.*

The school used \$90,000 of the \$300,000 grant to purchase a simulator, and was able to secure a semi tractor and trailer from Batesville-based Crumm Logistics. Additionally, with Next Gen’s help, they received a trailer donated by FedEx, along with a backup truck and trailer.

*“With the help of Next Gen they put me in touch with Dave Dein in Patterson, California, and we did some Zoom calls with him on how it was run,” Patton said. “We did some tweaks and made it our own, and I had to learn all the Federal Motor*

*Carrier Safety Administration rules – how you have to go and put kids in and make sure their paperwork is done. And we had to figure out insurance, how to add the trucks and the drivers to the corporation coverage.”*



**By January 2023, the program launched with six students, and by the end of the first year, four of them secured jobs as professional truck drivers. The following year saw 12 students enrolled, and this year the program has grown to 15 students, including several from other schools who travel to Rockport for the classes.**



**“They’re thankful for the opportunity to get their CDL without having to pay for it,” Patton said. “We’ve had a few kids move into our community just for this program because other schools don’t offer it. We have three or four kids in it now who are farmers, and they’re looking to what they’re going to do next. They want to be linemen, so by getting their CDLs, when they go to lineman school they are going to be ahead of everyone else by already having it.”**

Patton highlighted one student who breaks the mold of the type of students people might expect in a truck-driving program: A female athlete and a high academic achiever,

whose family owns a farm. She wants to be the first female involved with the farm who earns a CDL and can drive a truck.

**“She kind of breaks the myth of the type of student who signs up for this program,” Patton said.**

The program now offers morning and afternoon sessions, and includes several students in other vocational programs who want to get their CDLs.

**“This is a tool in their belt that they can use for the rest of their lives,” Patton said. “We’re preparing them for the future in more ways than one, because not every kid’s going to go to college and get a job that way. But if they can get their CDL and go to work right out of high school, it’s just another opportunity we can offer our students.”**



# Partner with **Next Gen!**

**Our mission is simple:  
To help fill the industry's need for  
drivers while giving young people an  
exceptional opportunity to enhance  
their lives and their futures.**

SCAN ME



## **When you partner with us, we will:**

- ▶ Educate teachers and administrators on how to lead and operate trucking-related programs.
- ▶ Provide up-to-date, comprehensive curriculum.
- ▶ Offer guidance on securing funding and equipment.
- ▶ Facilitate connections between the trucking industry and the schools offering these programs.
- ▶ Supply ongoing support you may need to ensure the success of your program.

**It's the perfect partnership  
between students looking for great  
opportunities and a critical industry  
with good-paying jobs at the ready.**



**We look  
forward to  
partnering  
with **you!****