

Good Morning Chairwoman Foxx, Ranking Member Scott, and members of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. First allow me to thank you for inviting me to speak to the House Committee on Education and the Workforce's Innovation Forum and Showcase. I am honored and humbled to be in front of you at this moment. My story into education is one that was not supposed to be, there was no way I was ever going to be an educator. The famous artist, Vincent Van Gogh once said "Great things are done by a series of small things brought together". A series of small things is what brought me into education.

My name is Joe Luther, and I am currently the Horticulture and Landscaping Instructor at the Central Pa Institute of Science and Technology located in Pleasant Gap, Centre County, Pennsylvania. Prior to becoming a teacher, I owned and operated a landscape company in which I started at the age of 17, as a senior in high school. I attended the Pennsylvania College of Technology and graduated with an Associate Degree in 2002. Even though the business was doing well there was always something missing and I could not figure it out until 2009. A friend of mine asked if I ever considered being a teacher because there was an opening at CPI for a Landscape teacher. I applied for the position and have not looked back since. In 2014, I was named the ACTE New Career and Technical Teacher of the Year for Pennsylvania and this past December I was awarded the National Career and Technical Teacher of the Year by NOCTI. I have received my Vocational I, Vocational II certificate, Bachelors of Science in Workforce Education, and will complete my Master's Degree with Director Certification in the Spring of 2019 from Penn State.

While at CPI, my class has completed numerous real life, hands on projects. Each year we partner with EP Henry, which is a national hardscape manufacture, and their heroscape program. We have completed projects for two local Centre County veterans at their personal homes and three community projects. The latest project was our largest in which we installed 1,200 sq ft of pavers and retaining walls into the shape of the Pennsylvania keystone at Foster Sayers Dam, to honor the late Foster Sayers. Working and partnering with EP Henry has been truly been a great experience. My students receive the newest products; we attend all of the trade shows at no cost to the school. EP Henry sponsors us every step of the way. Through our partnership with them we have placed first the last four consecutive years at the Pa Farm Show in the large landscape displays and second the last three years at the National Landscape build off held at the Big E in Springfield, Massachusetts. By doing these types of projects, my students are receiving the best hands on type of education there is. They design, build and then maintain these projects each and every year. My classroom is just not about working on projects, I give my students every opportunity to speak and use various literacy strategies. They have to greet customers, inform customers, and ultimately sale the job. We take the ordinary classroom curriculum and transform it into real life scenarios, at times full of every challenge possible, but this is what builds the future workforce.

As we look to the future, we must start to think about Career and Technical Education as a great option for students. There are many success stories that start with a solid foundation in CTE. Career and Technical Education gives students many opportunities to succeed, change their life, and become a productive member of society in which we desperately need for the future workforce in America.