

TIPS TO **TRADE UP** *American Standard*

How to Partner with American Standard to Support Your Local Vocational Schools

Plumbers can't protect the health of the nation if there aren't enough plumbers to do the work.

That's why American Standard seeks to increase the number of people who enter the plumbing profession by convincing them to trade up to a career in plumbing. Our **TradeUP** initiative fosters partnerships with allies like our customers and sales representatives to identify and eliminate barriers to entry.

In this tip sheet, we want to share our best practices for working with your local vocational and technical schools to help them deliver on their mission to attract and train the next generation of plumbers.

1. START INSIDE - DESIGNATE A TRADEUP ADVOCATE

The best step to ensure success is to identify and empower an advocate or team of advocates within your organization to champion your **TradeUP** effort. Ensure that your advocates are enthusiastic about the cause and are also skilled and persistent communicators.

2. INVESTIGATE SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES

The Nexstar Legacy Foundation is a good starting point to identify vocational schools in your region that offer a plumbing curriculum. Depending on your location, you may have one or many targets. In New Jersey, we identified 18 programs, not all of which are in the Nexstar database, so supplement your search using Google. If there are no programs in your area, consider reaching out to schools that offer training in a different construction trade and ask if they are considering adding plumbing training coursework. Find out more at www.explorethetrades.org

TIP: If you find there are no plumbing training programs in your area, contact the American Standard TradeUp/Service Team at TradeUp@lixil.com and we can work with you to discuss available options.

3. REACH OUT FOR A MEETING

Enter all your area's vocational school information into a spreadsheet or CRM and assign your internal advocates to establish connections. There may be a plumbing contact on the website, but in many cases, you will need to call the schools to identify who directs the plumbing programs. Explain that you're looking to promote the **TradeUP Program** and be prepared to give a brief explanation of the initiative. Your first step should be to identify the support you can provide to each school. You might use language such as:

Hi, I'm calling from _____, and we are interested in finding ways to support your plumber training programs. We are concerned about the nationwide trend of fewer people entering the plumbing profession, and how this impacts our area. May we take 30 minutes of your time by phone or in person to discuss what you are experiencing with your program? We are supported by our leadership and by our vendor/partner, LIXIL Americas, which makes plumbing products such as American Standard and GROHE. I would like to start a dialogue to find out if there are ways we can help you.

TIP: Like everyone else, vocational school instructors are busy and may not connect with you on the first try, especially if they need help. Stay persistent and maintain regular outreach between September and May, when most schools are in session.

4. IDENTIFY WAYS YOU CAN HELP

In our experience with New Jersey vocational schools, you will encounter a range of needs. Initially, your job is to listen and evaluate. Ideally, avoid language that indicates a commitment until you have a plan to deliver. Better to start small, under-promise and over-deliver to build trust for a long-term relationship. Potential areas of help include:

NEED	HOW TO HELP
Product investment for schools in need	American Standard can invest products in schools that are in need. After we visit the school, speak with the students and instructors, we can provide an assessment of the shop. Contact TradeUp@lixil.com for more details.
Updated product for training	American Standard can provide current product for training. Get a list of needs from the schools and contact TradeUp@lixil.com so we can work with you to secure the donations.
Updated materials for training	This is a longer-term fix, as some curriculums need to be updated to address newer technologies. Take note of the needs and share them with us so we can identify training gaps across the country and work with organizations that provide plumbing curriculums.
Help to identify apprentice opportunities	A lot of plumbers need help, but not all firms are geared towards taking apprentices. American Standard can help you reach out to your plumber customers and our plumber contacts to ask for their support.
Materials for community outreach	American Standard can make tools available such as presentations and leave-behinds to make a case for trading up to plumbing careers.
Assistance with community outreach	You might consider opening your doors to student tours, particularly if you have training facilities. Invite successful plumbers from your customer base to demonstrate the career potential. If you are planning to help the local schools with outreach, such as speaking at Career Days, American Standard can help provide speakers, as well as materials.

5. BUILD A LOCAL COALITION

Changing how people think about plumbing careers is a big ask, but fortunately, there are a lot of people and organizations focused on this issue. Although the need is great, we have found that pacing yourself with a steady build will move the ball forward without feeling overwhelmed. In addition to resources you are likely to learn about through your vocational school outreach, here are other ways to identify like-minded activists in your region who can help:

- Trade associations:** Nearly all major associations in our industry have dedicated resources to this issue. Your local chapter representatives are a resource.
- Newsmakers:** Local media often spotlights efforts to attract more interest in trade careers. Connect with individuals you learn about through media stories.
- Lawmakers:** Many states have advocates in their legislatures advancing the cause to support vocational education. Identify advocates in your state by searching the **National Conference of State Legislatures** database for sponsors of education bills related to Career and Technical Education, Postsecondary-Veterans, Postsecondary-Vocational/Technical Education and Postsecondary-Workforce Development.