



An Introduction

Today's jobs require some kind of training or education beyond high school. However, too many young people are leaving high school without ever having had the chance to meaningfully explore actual jobs and career pathways and build the skills they will need to pursue those careers.

In fact, Washington state has many employers who are unable to find people with the right training and qualifications and needing to recruit from out of state. With one of the fastest growing economies in the nation, our students should not be left on the sidelines.

The state expects 740,000 job openings over the next five years – almost three quarters of which require a credential beyond high school. To keep these employers growing here and to enable our young people to achieve their highest potential, we need to connect more Washington students to the in-demand high potential careers right here in our state.

Career connected learning bridges the gap between students and their futures

Everyone learns in different ways. Career connected learning programs are a great way to educate students while exposing them to a variety of careers and real-world skills, and those programs have different levels of intensity and preparation. Our state has some programs and opportunities already in place, but the time has come to scale up and ensure that all Washington students have a chance to access them. Here are some general categories and examples:

1. **Career Awareness and Exploration:** Resources and events can provide early exposure to new jobs and industries. This can take many forms, including job fairs, guest speakers, job shadows, job-site tours and similar activities.
2. **Career Preparation:** These programs give students hands-on experience with a particular business, career track or industry, and help them prepare for being hired in a professional setting. For example, career and technical education (CTEs) courses, on-site internships, pre-apprenticeship programs and other similar opportunities.
3. **Career Launch:** The most intensive type of career connected learning program, Career Launch programs combine paid, meaningful work experiences with aligned classroom learning so students can receive a credential and become a competitive job candidate. This includes formal registered apprenticeships and Career Launch programs in the K-12, CTC, and 4-year systems.

Students and families are eager for these options. A recent survey found that 75% of Washington residents agree that not enough is being done to expose students to different types of on-the-job learning opportunities, and 94% believe learning real-world skills is an important element of a student's experience.

The Career Connect Washington Vision

Career Connect Washington is a consortium of business, education, labor and government leaders who are committed to ensuring that every young adult in Washington will have multiple pathways to self-sufficiency and fulfillment, strengthened by a comprehensive state-wide system for career connected learning.

Career connected learning provides students with a real-world laboratory to advance their education and explore possible futures. They learn to work in teams, be accountable to someone other than a teacher or parent, be mentored by adults who can become their greatest champions, and to think across multiple systems, problem solve and apply creativity.

Better outcomes for young adults: Career connected learning doesn't force young people to commit to a career too soon; rather, it supports them as they explore careers and learn about the kinds of credentials and education they'll need to achieve their goals. We are dedicated to creating equitable access to high-quality career connected learning opportunities for every Washington young adult:

- be academically prepared and work-ready,
- be supported and guided in making choices about their education and careers,
- have meaningful real-world learning experiences,
- gain valuable credentials for high-opportunity careers, and
- move forward on their path toward careers and / or further education.

Better outcomes for employers: Employers will be able to hire from a talented pool of local applicants who have the education and experience they need. Employers will:

- have easy, accessible engagement in career connected learning efforts,
- have access to talented candidates that are prepared and trained to fill workforce gaps,
- improve retention of that talent over time,
- have a workforce of life-long learners, passionate about their career choices, and
- be well positioned to meet changing industry needs.

Next Steps

Building a comprehensive, statewide system involves the long-term commitment from a variety of organizations. Over the last six months, many stakeholders throughout the state have come together to create a strategic plan which builds off of current successful approaches and presents a framework for how to scale career connected learning to make it available for all students. Specific goals, outcomes and measures are included in this plan, with a roadmap for policy and funding changes needed to make this happen.

Please join us.

www.CareerConnectWA.org