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**Washington state students to have real-world work experience incorporated into school life**

*Governor, SPI Reykdal, legislators, state education, business and labor leaders lay out Career Connect Washington plan for increasing pathways for young people to careers*

Seattle, WA— Washington state is on a path to expanding ways for students to start learning about careers earlier and get more real-world experiences in high school and beyond as Gov. Jay Inslee and a broad coalition rolls out a plan to integrate more career connected learning into Washington schools.

“We’re projected to see 740,000 new jobs in Washington state in the next five years. The good news is these are high-skilled, high-pay jobs; the challenge is that 70 percent of them will need workers with a credential and right now, only 40 of our high school graduates are getting there,” said Governor Jay Inslee. “We need to engage students in more meaningful ways, from earlier ages, so that as they finish high school and start to make adult decisions about advanced education and training, they’ll be doing it from a place of experience.”

Career Connect Washington released a plan on October 25 that maps the vision, the framework and the strategic approach to meeting the need on a statewide scale. The project is being led by Maud Daudon, former CEO of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce. Business leaders, labor organizations, legislators, industry associations, educators, students, parents and policy leaders all participated in shaping the Career Connect Washington Plan. Legislation is expected to be introduced in Olympia to implement the Plan.

“When we started this journey, we knew how important it was to employers to help develop the workforce needed to grow,” said Daudon. “What was exciting was finding out to what degree students and parents also wanted more ways to explore and prepare for careers. That’s when we knew we were really meeting a need felt by families across the state: the need for all students to have meaningful, hands-on experiences in work environments so they can make the most advantage of all the post-high school education and training options.”

Conversations with groups of parents and students across the state early in the process showed that they recognized both the challenge for students, and the opportunity.

“My kids will hear about my job, but they are not going to hear about jobs that have come into existence like since I started working,” said one parent. “So I love that it gave exposure to things they didn’t know was even a job.” Another said: “It helps kids be able to make a plan and get to know their abilities for direction. “They can go in and say, ‘Whoa, this is not me at all,’ or ‘Maybe this is the thing.’”

Clark County high school students who had completed summer internships saw them as an essential experience for making decisions for beyond high school.

“What’s the point of paying for college if you don’t know what you want to do with it? So it was important to me to get an internship to give me that kind of experience,” said one. Said another: “Once you realize the things it can give you, I think honestly all the work I put in was 100% worth it. It changed the way I viewed what I wanted to do.”

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A survey of Washington residents done by Career Connect Washington found that:

- 75% believe that not enough is being done to expose students to different types of on-the-job learning opportunities
- 82% think schools do not do enough to prepare students for the real world
- 94% believe learning real-world skills is an important element of a student's experience
- 70% think it's very important to get on-the-job experience in a career field while still in high school
- 87% believe that expanding CCL opportunities will help ensure that students can succeed, regardless of family circumstances

### **Career Connected Learning**

Everyone learns in different ways. Career connected learning programs are a great way to educate students through exposure to a variety of careers and real-world skills. 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 skills and knowledge experience with a particular business, career track or industry, and help them be more prepared 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. Students earn academic credit and gain real-world skills. This includes formal registered apprenticeships and Career Launch programs in the K-12, CTC, and 4-year systems.

These programs are tried and tested; the challenge now is to turn many excellent local programs into a broader set of opportunities for students and employers across the state.

### **The Approach**

Career Connect Washington has brought together a large group of stakeholders to identify the best approach. The plan builds on the best thinking from business, labor, educators, government leaders and most importantly, students and parents.

Although there are many models across the country, in Washington right now, the most successful learning opportunities are based on employer need for skills they have identified as having long-term opportunity. The Career Connect Washington strategy builds on the model, allowing the sharing of programs through networks across the state, ensuring credential and credit transfer and portability for students, and developing new programs where none exist. The ten-year vision will enable choices for students across a learning continuum in all industry sectors.

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## The Kick-Off Event

At Thursday's event, state leaders reviewed the Career Connect Washington plan, showcased existing successful programs and discussed recent public polling. Attendees included Rep. Vandana Slatter, Sen. Lisa Wellman, Sen. Hans Zeiger, and representatives from the Washington State Labor Council, Amazon, SEIU 1199NW, Washington Technology Industry Association of Washington, SEH America, the Southwest Washington STEM Network, The Boeing Company, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, the Washington Roundtable/Partnership for Learning, Association of Washington Business, the Washington Council of Presidents and students who have participated in career training programs.

As part of the event, a group of state leaders toured Kaiser Permanente's new state-of-the-art laboratory, which processes blood and other samples from more than 30 clinical sites in Washington. Kaiser Permanente has developed a program to help high school students explore careers in health care, and the Renton lab will be one of the training locations. Kaiser Permanente is working in conjunction with other major health care employers, SEIU and many other labor unions to establish a host of new apprenticeship programs across the state – the first collaborative program of its type in the nation.

Event speakers:

- Gov. Jay Inslee
- Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal
- Kaiser Permanente Washington President Susan Mullaney
- SEIU Healthcare 1199NW President Diane Sosne
- Washington State Labor Council Secretary Treasurer Lynne Dodson
- Amazon Vice President of People Operations Ardine Williams
- and career connected learning program students

## Background and Additional Resources

This effort was started by Governor Inslee in May 2017 as part of the National Governor's Association Policy Academy on work-based learning. Washington was one of six states to receive funding from the Siemens Foundation. The Governor [established a task force](#) for Washington, and it issued its recommendations in [February 2018](#). Since then, Career Connect Washington ([www.CareerConnectWA.org](http://www.CareerConnectWA.org)) has been working with partners to design a system that will ensure every young person has access to meaningful learning experiences about their future careers.

For more information about career connected learning and the broad coalition committed to expanding opportunities in Washington, visit [www.CareerConnectWA.org](http://www.CareerConnectWA.org).

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