



What is career connected learning?

The vast majority of today's jobs require some training after high school – earning a credential, certificate, or college degree. However, too many young people are leaving high school without having explored actual jobs and careers, or the pathways that will take them there.

Career connected learning programs give young adults meaningful, on-the-job, real-world experience, coupled with relevant classroom learning. These experiences help prepare young people to take their education and career training and preparation to the next level. Here are some general categories and examples:

- **Career Awareness and Exploration:** Activities such as job fairs, guest speakers, and job shadowing all provide basic introductions to jobs and industries.
- **Career Preparation:** These programs offer a more intense experience, such as on-site internships or pre-apprenticeship programs.
- **Career Launch:** The most intensive type of career connected learning, these programs combine hands-on skills and classroom learning so students can get the credits or credentials they need to become strong job candidates.

Career connected learning can help young adults learn more about the kind of career and work environment that best fits them. It helps them see relevance in concepts learned in the classroom by applying them in a real-world setting. They are supported and mentored by adults who are vested in their success and become advocates for them. It also builds their self-confidence, social skills, and resume so that they have the skills, connections and experience needed to either get hired for a job they're passionate about or advance their education.

What does it look like in Washington state?

Washington state already has some great career connected learning programs in growing industries like aerospace, advanced manufacturing, health care and technology. The challenge is that right now, all those programs aren't available to all students in our state. To ensure every student gets the experience they need to set their own direction in life, we need to build a system that is responsive to the needs of employers, of the highest quality, and accessible for all students.

To do that, we have established [Career Connect Washington](#)—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 Connect Washington has a plan to make this goal a reality. It involves empowering leaders at the regional level to work with employers and educators to identify and expand career connected learning programs and to help link students to those programs.

How do we make this plan a reality?

In 2019, the Washington State Legislature will consider funding to implement the Career Connect Washington Plan. The Governor's proposed 2019-21 biennial budget included critical funding to scale and expand career connected learning programs across Washington. In addition, investments were proposed in regional networks and supports for students.

Is this just for high-school students who aren't going to college?

Absolutely not! Meaningful exposure to a variety of industries and professions helps all young people develop a sense of direction for their life. Career connected learning helps expose young people to careers so that they can pursue the education they need.

In the most intensive programs, students are able to earn college level credit and a paycheck, while becoming fully skilled for a real job. Upon completion, students can choose among all the options in front of them: a four-year or two-year degree, specialized training, or go straight to work. The main difference is that they're in a better position to make those decisions.

What kind of jobs and industries are part of career connected learning?

This is a wide-ranging effort that includes a broad array of industries including manufacturing, health care, technology, aerospace and more. This is not just about preparing young people to do a particular job; it's about providing skill building and education in an aligned work-based and classroom curriculum.

A job experience with a manufacturer might lead a student to engineering, finance, management, marketing or product design. A job experience in a hospital might start as a medical assistant but grow to nursing, medical school or administration.

Are employers and labor unions participating in Career Connect Washington?

Yes! Businesses all over the state are hiring for high-wage jobs but are frustrated by the fact that we aren't preparing students well for those jobs. Especially as experienced older workers are beginning to retire, local industries are eager to have access to talented candidates who are academically prepared and work-ready. They also want employees who are going to be life-long learners and who will be able to help meet changing industry needs.

Our state's labor unions are also deeply engaged. They have years of experience connecting candidates to jobs and training through the registered apprenticeship model and have deep knowledge of how to make these programs work for employers and employees.

Where can I learn more?

Our website has a full list of organizations and individuals who are involved in this effort; you may also like to explore some examples of career connected learning in action. There are also several video profiles of how this is already working.