



Hot Workforce Topics for K-12 Education

Paid and Unpaid Work Experiences

Young adults in Washington have significantly higher unemployment rates than the general population. Not only do they lack jobs, but they miss out on work experiences that boost future performance and earnings. Public education and policies should seek to increase volunteer opportunities, internships, apprenticeships and summer work programs so youth can gain job skills, work habits and confidence. The Workforce Board has recently released a report that provides recommendations on improving the unemployment rates of young adults. (See link below.)

High School Completion

More than one out of four Washington youth do not graduate on-time with their peers, putting them at risk of a lifetime of lower earnings, ongoing public assistance and incarceration. Many of the recommendations in the January, 2011 report of the Building Bridges Work Group (see link below) can move forward without state funding. If possible, funds should be provided to schools with the lowest graduation rates so the state can continue to build expertise. In turn, the state will be in a better position when the state budget allows for the level of investment this issue demands. As the state grapples with a reduced budget, Washington's policy leadership in dropout reduction should not be lost.

Relevant, Applied Learning through CTE

Career and Technical Education classes capture a student's attention, tap their interests and talents, and lead to careers that pay living wages. By providing academic rigor in a work-relevant context, career and technical education in Washington's middle and high schools provide another way to connect students to learning, enabling them to see the value of continuing their education through high school, and beyond. Both the Technical High School Advisory Committee in 2009 and the STEM Work Group in 2010 have recommended developing innovative school models that provide students with work-relevant education.

Guidance and Mentoring

Starting in middle school, students need to connect with a caring adult who can help them sort through the many decisions they face. The Workforce Board was a pioneer in supporting a model of comprehensive career counseling and guidance, Navigation 101, which provides such support to all students in a school building. The Governor's proposed 2011-2013 budget continues funding for dissemination of the Navigation 101 model. The Workforce Board also publishes a career guide for students and has an award-winning website, Career Bridge (CareerBridge.wa.gov) to assist students of all ages in selecting a career and a related training program to prepare for that career.

All reports and materials prepared for legislative use are available at:
<http://www.wtb.wa.gov/LegislativePapers.asp>