

Multiple Pathways for Young Adults

Initiatives Connecting Young Washingtonians to the World of Work



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Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board
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Executive Summary

Washington's young adults continue to struggle with significantly higher unemployment rates than older working adults. Even so, the previous two years have shown signs of improvement, with young adults notching substantial employment gains. Between 2014 and 2015, the unemployment rate among young people aged 16-19 dropped from 23.2 percent to 17.4 percent. Unemployment among older young adults (aged 20-24) also dipped during that same time, dropping from 14.3 percent to 9.6 percent.

Despite these recent gains, however, the employment gap between young adults and older working adults persists. In 2015, the overall labor force had an unemployment rate of 5.6 percent, a full 12 percentage points lower than the unemployment rate for 16 to 19 year olds and 4 percentage points lower than the unemployment rate of 20 to 24 year olds.

It's clear, however, that young adults are making strides in the labor market in the wake of the the Great Recession. Unemployment rates are virtually the same now for younger workers as they were prior to the recession, which officially lasted from December 2007 to June 2009. For example, in the pre-recession year of 2007, the unemployment rate for 20-24 year olds in Washington was 9.0 percent. In 2015 it was 9.6 percent for this age cohort. The unemployment rate for 16-19 year olds was 17.6 percent in 2007 and was identical (17.6 percent) in 2015.

Young people, in other words, are hit harder than other age groups when the economy slumps and even returning to "normal" means that there is much work to be done in finding solutions to chronic youth unemployment.

The impacts of high unemployment on young adults are far reaching and go beyond young adults taking longer to find their first rung on the career ladder. This "failure to launch" puts them in competition with the younger people coming up behind them, new labor market entrants who continue to fill the pipeline and are often selected over "older" young adults for likely first jobs. Because of this competition, young adults often "age out" of the running for entry-level positions, critical for gaining foundational workplace skills. At the other end of the spectrum, older, experienced workers buffeted by unemployment and lay-offs are vying more often for those same low-wage, often entry-level jobs. And as older, experienced adult workers take lower wage jobs, "likely youth jobs" are decreasing, further heightening the competition.

Delayed entry into the labor market comes with serious repercussions for Washington's youth, pushing down individual income, lifetime earning potential, and long-term employability for a generation of workers. More worrisome is the number of disconnected young adults, who are

neither in school or employed. This group is not actively gaining skills or credentials, and is not building a resume through work experience, or earning a paycheck, for that matter.

Education is Key

Education—particularly education that goes beyond a high school diploma—is proven to help young adults successfully enter the labor market, earn higher wages and increase their job security. Unemployment rates for young adults drop considerably as they gain postsecondary education or training, whether it’s an associate’s degree or certificate, a four-year degree, or apprenticeship. Young people who earn a two-year or four-year degree have the lowest rates of unemployment, at 5 percent and 7 percent,¹ respectively.

Meanwhile, those who drop out of high school face the biggest employment challenge. One out of three young adults who has not earned a high school diploma is unemployed—the highest among their peers. Washington’s 77 percent graduation rate falls below the 80 percent average rate nationwide. And the state’s low-income 12th graders have just a 66 percent graduation rate.

Finding new ways to reconnect with out-of-school youth, many of whom lack high school diplomas, is a pressing need that goes beyond our state. It’s a key piece of the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which replaced and expanded upon the long-standing Workforce Investment Act in 2015. The first federal reform of the workforce system in 15 years, WIOA, promises better integration of workforce services across a wide range of populations, and a more substantial investment in older, out-of-school youth.

Disconnected Youth or Lost Opportunity?

Approximately one in seven youth aged 16-24 in Washington (13.1 percent) are not in school and not working, mirroring the national average of 13.2 percent.² Persistent unemployment and disconnection from work places our state’s youth at a competitive disadvantage. This struggle to connect to the economy also erodes confidence and optimism, replacing it with doubt about their preparation for entering the job market.

Disconnected teens and young adults represent a critical lost asset in Washington’s economy. However, when provided the right resources, understanding, and access, these young people represent a unique opportunity. The benefits derived from fully engaging disconnected young

¹ U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 American Community Survey.

² Nation, O. (2017), Opportunity Index, Washington Opportunity Index. See the Community Score index. <http://opportunityindex.org/#5.00/45.635/-93.089/>

adults in education and the workforce are felt not only by the individual young person, but by the surrounding communities where they live and work.

Research shows the length of disconnection matters to young adult success. For instance, of those who were disconnected from employment for between one and two years, 61 percent of men and 48 percent of women were employed full time between the ages of 25-28. Yet of those who were disconnected from the workforce or education for three years or more, only 41 percent of men and 21 percent of women were employed full time between the ages of 25-28. For individuals who stayed connected to school or employment, 75 percent of men and 62 percent of women were employed full time at the same age in their lives.³

Career-Connected Learning Opportunities are Vital for Work Skills Development

Career-connected learning is a foundation of career readiness—a critical component of what is expected of young adults as they complete middle and high school—and postsecondary education and training. Through work experiences like job shadows, career fairs, and internships, career-connected learning allows students to gain valuable experience and skills needed to succeed in the workplace. This is recognized by the Career Readiness Partnership Council (CRPC), a nationwide partnership that includes several businesses and foundations. In a recent effort to define career readiness, the CRPC recognized that college readiness is only part of the answer. What is needed is a more comprehensive and systemic strategy that bridges the gap between education and workforce preparation for all students.⁴

Possible Solutions

Moving forward, a comprehensive solution must speak to all young Washingtonians, including: those still in school, those who have exited high school, and those who have yet to transition to either postsecondary education or a meaningful career path.

The solution should emphasize:

- Short-term credentials focused on in-demand jobs that quickly move many young people into the labor market at satisfactory wages.
- Programs that offer “earn-and-learn” options like apprenticeships and paid internships.
- Education programs that blend work-based learning with classroom learning.

These types of programs should be supported and expanded, in particular for the many young people who have aged out of our K-12 system, often with little or no means of support.

³ Bridgeland, J. M., & Milano, J. A. (2012). *Opportunity Road; the Promise and Challenge of America's Forgotten Youth*. Civic Enterprises & America's Promise Alliance.

⁴ Career Ready Partner Council. (2012). *Building Blocks for Change: What it Means to be Career Ready*. Career Ready Partner Council.

For those still in school, the focus needs to be on:

- Career Guidance
- Career and Education Planning
- Career-Connected Learning

Even as Washington's youth scramble for employment, thousands of Washington employers report leaving positions unfilled for lack of qualified candidates who have the necessary education or skills. In particular, employers report a lack of "soft skills" or "work readiness" skills among young job applicants. Many young people lack work readiness skills such as being punctual, dressing appropriately, and working as part of a team.

Lack of work experience is a key reason why young people lack these employability skills. When young people are unable to land a first job, it makes it much more difficult to learn these unwritten but critical skills and find a foothold in the labor market. It also increases the likelihood of being unemployed later in life.

Designating College and Career Readiness Lighthouse Schools

Lack of work experience among Washington youth, and missed opportunities to develop career skills, makes it that much more important that our state's middle and high school students have the tools they need to be career and college ready.

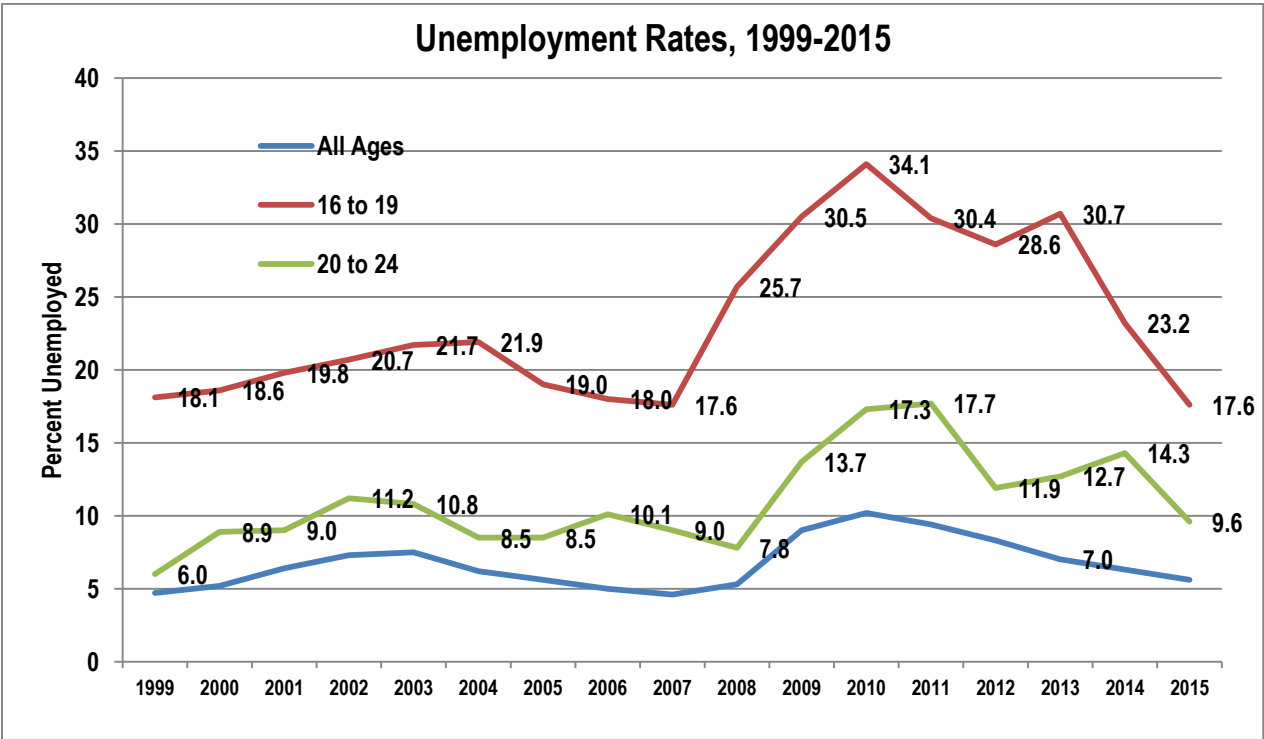
As part of the state's comprehensive strategy to prepare high school graduates for careers that lead to economic self-sufficiency, the Legislature charged the Workforce Board with convening an advisory group focused on identifying "College and Career Readiness Lighthouse Schools." These schools will serve as mentors and help bring to scale career-and-college ready strategies to other schools around the state. This new approach to expanding career-and-college readiness builds on an earlier effort created by the Legislature in 2010, STEM Lighthouse Schools, that also brings schools together to share best practices around curriculum development, training, and building strong partnerships with businesses and the community.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction designates up to six middle and high schools as STEM Lighthouses each year to serve as resources on how to combine best practices in creating small, highly personalized learning communities, an interdisciplinary STEM-focused curriculum delivered through a project-based instructional approach, and active partnerships with the business and local community. STEM Lighthouse School designees receive a grant award of up to \$20,000.

The STEM Lighthouse School program selection criteria and community of practice concept is anchored in a “career academies” policy framework that has been championed by the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) for several decades. The career academies National Standards of Practice present an ideal set of criteria for designating College and Career Readiness Lighthouse Schools.

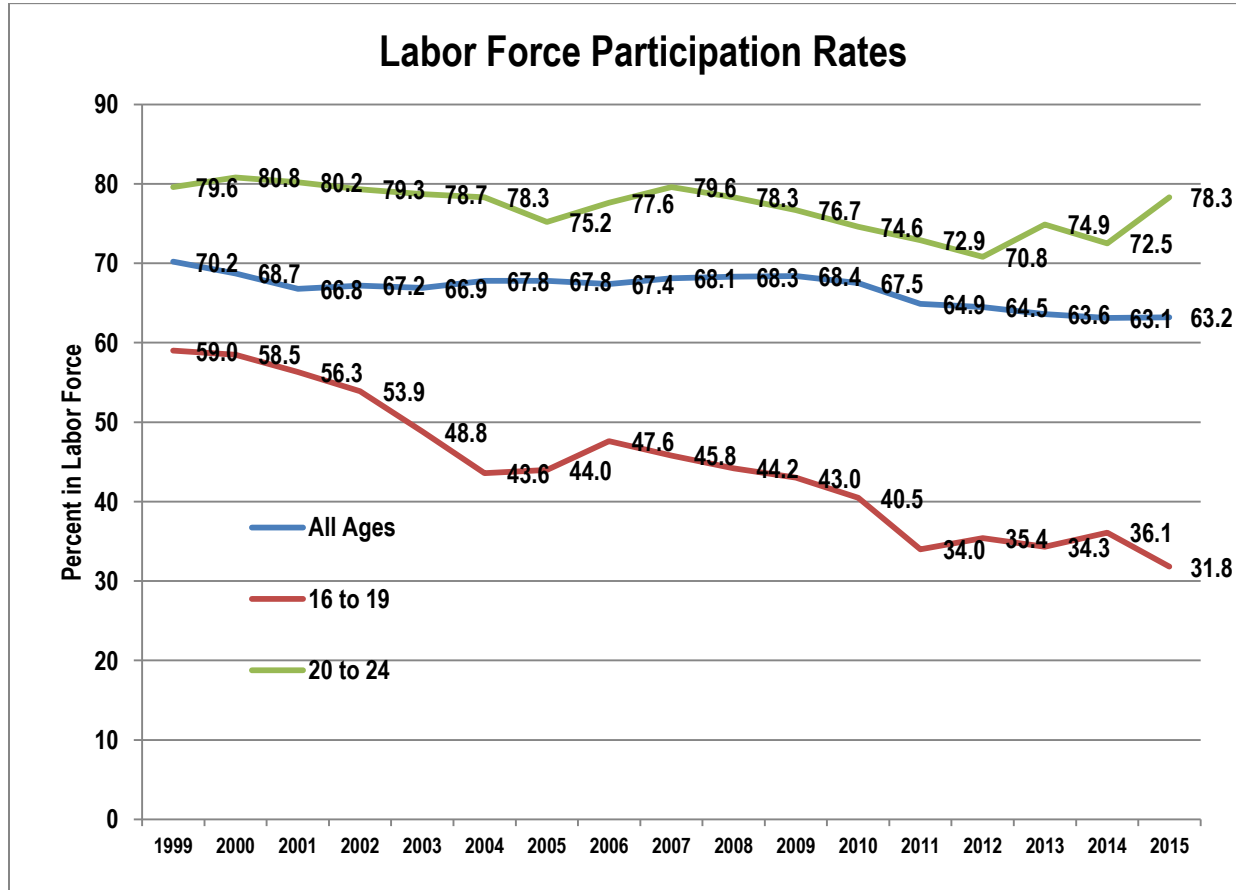
Young Adult Unemployment

The youngest members of our workforce (16-19 year olds) experience higher unemployment rates than adult workers (including the 20-24 cohort), and the problem tends to worsen in economic downturns. In 2015, these younger workers had an unemployment rate of 17.6 percent, 12 percentage points higher than the rate for all workers, and 4 percentage points higher than that of 20-24 year olds. The difference between the unemployment rate for the youngest cohort compared to all workers peaked in 2010 at 23.9 percentage points. The chart below compares unemployment rates between these age categories.



In part because of difficulties finding work, younger workers can become discouraged, sitting on the sidelines of the labor market instead of searching for work. This reluctance translates into lower labor force participation rates (the percent of a given group either working or looking for work). While some of this is due to a higher percent of young people enrolling in some form of education and training, the long-term trend shows a continuing decline in labor force participation (see following table). The declining participation rates for 16-19 year olds

accelerated during the recession. Since the economy began to recover, it has continued downward, signaling deeper, long-term issues. Those aged 20-24 have seen moderate but consistent declines in participation rates, although participation climbed by nearly 6 percentage points in the most recent reporting period.



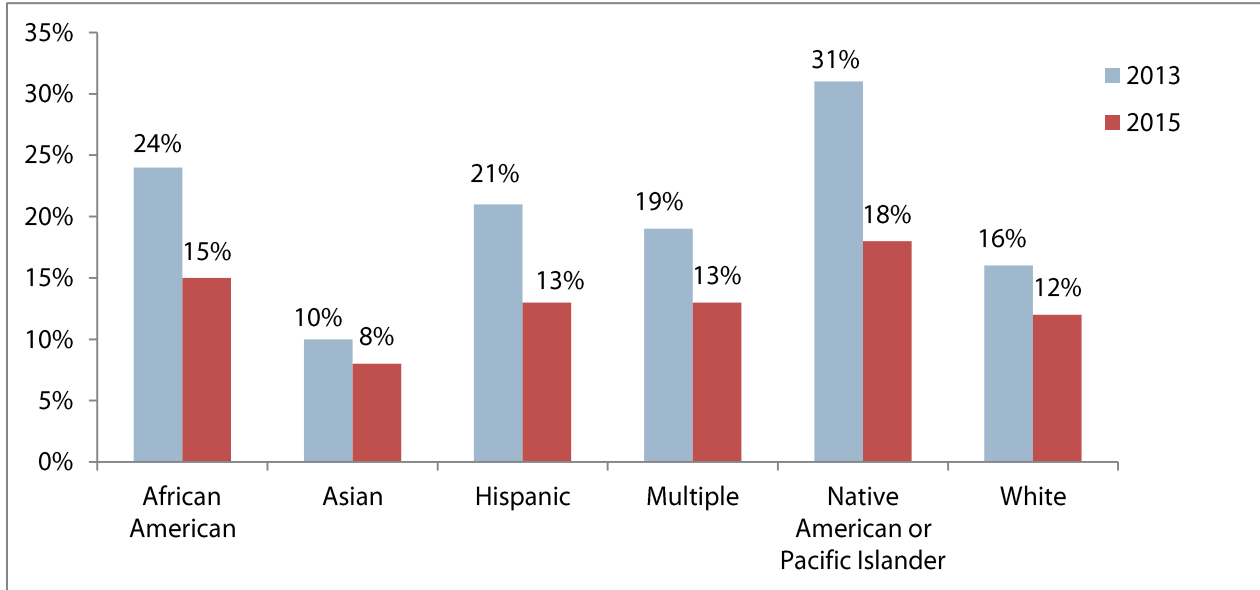
Unemployment Rates Higher among Minorities

As previously noted, overall youth unemployment rates have fallen and labor markets improved in the years following the recession. In line with that economic recovery, individual ethnic groups saw improving prospects by 2015. But the experience has not been the same across all ethnic and racial groups. For example, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders⁵ (together) saw their combined unemployment rate drop from 31 percent to 18 percent between 2013 and 2015. Even with that improvement, an unemployment rate of 18 percent translates into nearly one in five young people from these groups being unemployed. As can be seen, the most vulnerable groups are the most at risk during economic downturns. The groups with the lowest unemployment rates, Asians (8 percent) and whites (12 percent) saw the

⁵ Typically, these groups are not combined, but we have done so due to the small sample size in the Census data.

smallest declines in unemployment rates between 2013 and 2015. African Americans (15 percent) had the second highest unemployment rate in 2015, followed by Hispanics⁶ and those of multiple ethnicities at 13 percent.

Unemployment Rates by Race⁷ and Ethnicity



Far Reaching Impacts from Youth Unemployment

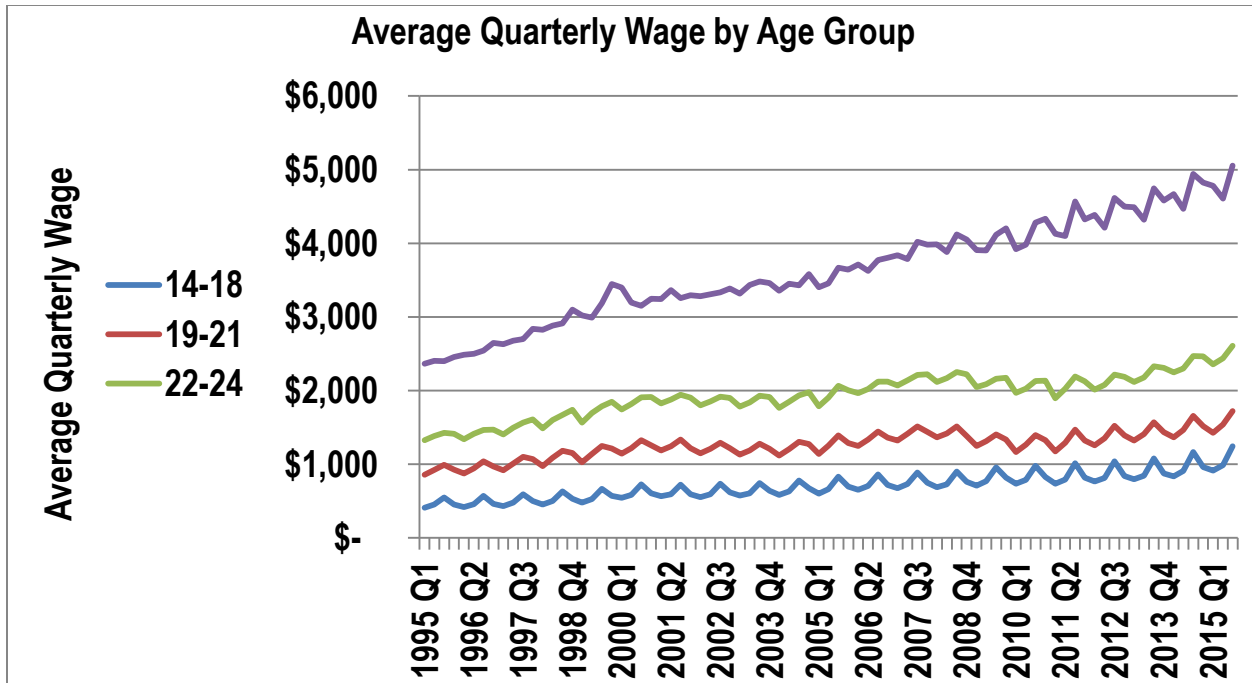
High unemployment and long-term low wages are often intertwined. A young person who experiences a six-month period of unemployment can expect to miss out on at least \$45,000 in wages over the next decade—about \$23,000 for the period of unemployment and an additional \$22,000 in lagging wages due to their time spent unemployed.⁸ Higher unemployment rates not only depress initial wages; they can harm lifetime earning potential as well. One study found individuals who experience joblessness when unemployment rates are above 8 percent will see a loss of 2.8 years of earnings over their lifetime.⁹ Graduating in a bad economy has long-lasting economic consequences.

⁶ Note that Hispanics are not technically an ethnicity and can include other ethnicities. For the purposes of this report, those that identified as both Hispanic and an ethnicity were only counted as Hispanic.

⁷ Note that some of these populations are very small and susceptible to wide variations in estimates. For this reason, Native American and Pacific Islander youth were combined.

⁸ Ayres, Sarah. (2013). America's 10 Million Unemployed Youth Spell Danger for Future Economic Growth. Center for American Progress.

⁹ Rory O'Sullivan, A. J. (2012). No end in sight? The long-term youth jobs gap and what it means for America. Young Invincibles.



Nearly one-third of workers aged 14-18 worked in the accommodation and food service industries, which tend to have relatively low wages. Overall, about 40 percent of 19-21 year old workers worked in either accommodation and food services or retail. This compares with 29 percent of 22-24 year olds working in these two industries. By contrast, just 13 percent of 45-54 year old workers were employed in these industries.

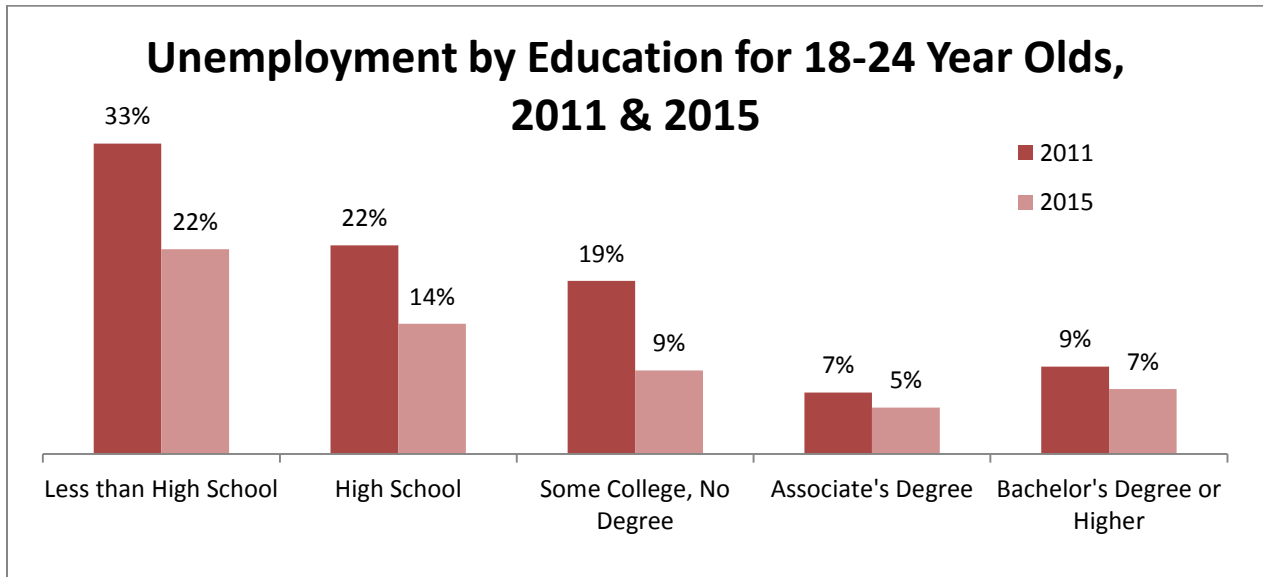
Nearly one in three young adults (28 percent) without a high school diploma were unemployed in 2012. Meanwhile, the unemployment rate varied from 6 to 7 percent among young adults with a postsecondary degree.¹⁰ Jobs in sectors such as manufacturing, where past generations of high school graduates used to find work after graduation, now require post-high school education and training. More than 40 percent of manufacturing jobs are expected to require at least some postsecondary education and training by 2018. Overall, 70 percent of Washington’s jobs will require postsecondary education by 2020. Current education attainment levels are only 68 percent of the level projected to be necessary by 2020.¹¹

Even so, graduating high school is an important first step toward long-term career success. High school graduates have significantly lower unemployment and higher earnings than those without diplomas, and this earning power and employability rise with additional education at every level.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau’s 2012 American Community Survey.

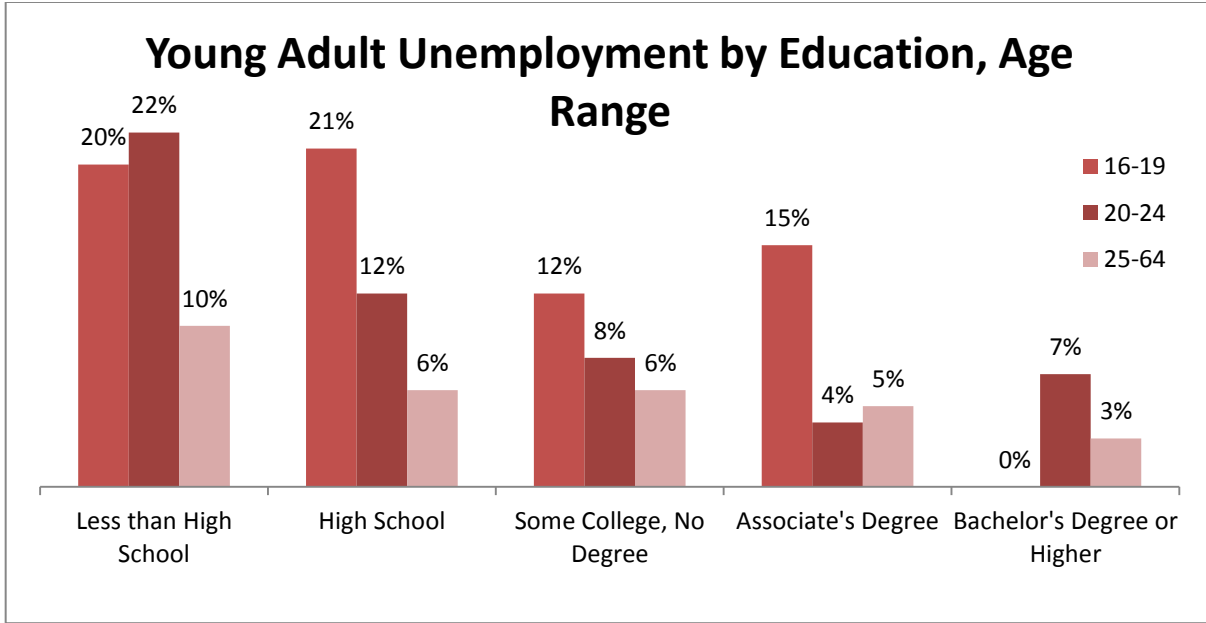
¹¹ Carnevale, Anthony P, Smith, Nicole, & Strohl, Jeff. Recovery, Job Growth and Education Requirements Through 2020. Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce.

The connection between education and employability applies to both genders and all ethnicities and races. Nationwide, 28 percent of youth say they should have been more deliberate about the courses they took as electives, and roughly the same number say they should have taken more classes directly related to preparing for a career.¹²



Education plays a significant role in the ability of young adults to land and keep jobs, as well as the prospects for a high-paying career. While youth without a high school diploma or equivalent did see falling unemployment rates (from 33 to 22 percent unemployed since 2011), they face serious obstacles to finding meaningful employment. Unemployment rates generally fell with higher educational attainment. One exception: youth aged 18-24 with an associate’s degree outperformed those with a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, the number of youth aged 18-24 years who have completed a bachelor’s degree or higher is a small number, impacting these results.

¹² Van Horn, C., Zukin, C., Szeltner, M., & Stone, C. (2012). Left out. Forgotten? Recent High School Graduates and the Great Recession. John I Heldrich Center for Workforce Development.



For many young adults, the critical first step in their transition from high school to higher education is proving difficult. More than one third of Washington’s young adults are not engaging in some form of education after high school within a year of earning their high school diploma. This problem becomes more acute when filtered through race.

Hispanics, Native Americans, and African Americans are underrepresented in post-high school education and training programs. When comparing postsecondary education trends with population projections, this problem becomes even more pressing. The following chart shows population growth projections through 2030. While all groups will grow during the next 20 years, minority population growth is expected to significantly outpace whites. Yet, if young people from many of the state’s minority groups don’t scale the education ladder in greater numbers through certificates, degrees, and apprenticeships, Washington’s workforce will be less educated than it is today.

Cost of Higher Education Poses Barrier

Tuition growth has outpaced growth in median household income over the past two decades, with tuition growing nearly 300 percent in that timeframe.¹³ This has resulted in 58 percent of graduates leaving college with some form of student debt.¹⁴ The relatively rapid increase in the

¹³ Higher Education Coordinating Board (now the Washington Student Achievement Council). (2009). Tuition Policy Report. Olympia: Higher Education Coordinating Board.

¹⁴ <http://college-insight.org/#explore/go&h=cb6ba2b1aa26f070939a59c8779084a6>

cost of a higher education is posing barriers to many students and families as they weigh the cost of education beyond high school.

The average debt of recent college graduates has steadily increased in recent years. In the 2009-10 school year, Washington's student debt load averaged \$22,101 per graduate. This increased to \$23,293 in the 2011-12 school year.¹⁵ In 2012-13, the average tuition and fees to attend a four-year institution for one year in Washington was \$15,670, while total costs reached \$30,460.¹⁶ Put another way, the consumer price index increased by 32% between 2001 and 2013, while tuition rose by 148 percent.

In 2015, the Governor and Washington State Legislature took proactive steps to address the rising cost of attending four-year higher education institutions. In the 2015-16 academic year, all four-year institutions of higher education were required to reduce resident undergraduate tuition by 5 percent, and in the 2016-17 academic year by an additional 20 percent reduction at regional institutions of higher education (including the Evergreen State College) and a 15 percent reduction at the state's research institutions. Beginning in 2017-18, public colleges and universities may only increase their resident undergraduate tuition rate by the average annual percentage growth rate in the median hourly wage in Washington during the previous 14 years. Although the Legislature has taken strong action to reduce the burdens of attending a four-year institution of higher education in Washington, financial barriers still exist at the two-year degree and certificate level that cannot be ignored.

State Aid Helping Close the Gap

To help low-income Washington young people afford college, the Legislature has funded a variety of financial aid programs, such as the College Bound Scholarship. The scholarship, which covers tuition and fees at the state's public colleges and universities, is available to eligible low-income seventh and eighth graders who maintain at least a 2.0 GPA in middle school and high school. Students must sign up by the end of their eighth-grade year. In 2013-14, College Bound Scholarship students had a four-year high school graduation rate of 76 percent, while other low-income students had a 60 percent graduation rate, according to the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC). Some 69 percent of College Bound Scholarship students are currently attending college, above the rate for all students in the high school class of 2012. Just 50 percent of other low-income students attended college, according to WSAC.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ College InSight from the Institute for College Access and Success, <http://college-insight.org/#>

Connecting Young People with Career-Connected Learning Opportunities

In-School Youth

Keeping Youth in School, Engaged, and on Track

When education is integrated with job skills and real-world applications, students see the relevance of what they're learning, and are better connected to school, the work world, and the post-high school education and training they need to enter into living-wage careers. Students also require career guidance to sort through their choices and make informed decisions about their life and education goals. Supporting that career exploration should be a structured, well-developed High School and Beyond Plan. The process of student-directed planning provides students with a personalized roadmap that leads to further post-high school preparation, including vocational credentials, two- and four-year degrees, apprenticeships, and other forms of advanced training.

Make career-connected learning and guidance a routine part of high school, rather than an add-on or wish list item.

Currently, the availability of career-connected learning, along with career guidance and planning, varies by where a student lives. Some Washington students are able to immerse themselves in these options, particularly at career-themed high schools, comprehensive career and technical education programs, and at regional Skill Centers. However, other Washington students have little career guidance and planning, and few opportunities to blend their career interests with academic skills. This report calls for making career-connected learning and guidance a routine part of high school, rather than an add-on or wish list item.

Ensuring Comprehensive and Robust Career Exploration and Guidance Opportunities for In-School Youth

Career guidance programs help students identify and think critically about their unique abilities, natural interests, and the realistic steps to achieve their goals. Washington students and their families, along with teachers and counselors, can choose from among several online career exploration resources.

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) features a one-stop comprehensive guidance program, Career Guidance Washington, on the agency's website that includes lesson plans that focus on career planning and a graduation tool kit. The program is designed to prepare students for their next steps after high school, with support from an advisor or counselor. Consolidated curriculum, customizable lesson plans, and career web tools are

located on the OSPI website and are available free of cost. Recent data indicate that college and career readiness programs like Career Guidance Washington increase student achievement and work well when part of a school-wide effort.¹⁷

<https://www.k12.wa.us/SecondaryEducation/CareerCollegeReadiness/default.aspx>

Since 2009, all Washington students entering ninth grade have been required to create a High School and Beyond Plan. However, because state graduation requirements do not specify a plan's contents, the plans vary considerably in their detail and rigor, depending on the school and school district. In general, these plans are designed to help students think about their future and select courses to prepare them for their education and career goals after high school. Students are expected to update and revise their plan as they move through high school and as their interests change. Typically, these plans are developed in a student's homeroom, or counselors meet with classes or individual students.

High School and Beyond Plan Can Be Strengthened
Establish statewide expectations for High School and Beyond Plans to ensure quality

These plans show great promise but are inconsistent across the state. Establishing statewide expectations for the content of these plans would help ensure they are rigorous, reliable, and valuable. Teachers and counselors also would benefit from professional development time to help students create and implement their plans.

Cross-Agency Collaboration on Career Pathway Development

In 2016, Washington was one of 25 states selected to participate in the *New Skills for Youth* initiative funded by JP Morgan Chase. JP Morgan Chase worked with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Association of State Directors of Career Technical Education Consortium to award grants to states for planning and early implementation of long-term career readiness education programs that align with the needs of area employers.

As a result of the initiative, the "Guided Pathways Collaborative" was formed in late 2016 to recommend, jointly devise, and sustain solutions necessary to transform and strengthen Washington's career readiness system. Guided Pathways Collaborative members include OSPI, the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (Workforce Board), the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), Manufacturing Industrial Council (MIC), Association of Washington Business (AWB), Washington State Building and Trades Council

¹⁷ The BERC Group. College Readiness Initiative: AVID and Navigation 101 (2013, November). Retrieved from http://www.collegespark.org/files/documents/CRI/CRI_Report_AVID_and_NAV_November_2013_FINAL.pdf

(WSBTC), Washington State Labor Council (WSLC), and Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce (SMCC). The group has put in place a stakeholder memorandum of understanding requiring quarterly meetings of K-12, postsecondary education, employer and workforce development professionals, and policy staff to align career pathway policy and priorities, informed by labor market information. The group will:

- (1) Establish protocols and venues for cross-system review of labor market data to plan high-demand, high-skill pathways. Also, the group will systematically identify gaps, and use data to drive career pathway development.
- (2) Develop and continually integrate OSPI, workforce system, college, Centers of Excellence, and Skill Panels employer engagement efforts to ensure that this work is shared and streamlined.
- (3) Convene regional labor market analysts, postsecondary and school district CTE faculty and guidance counselors throughout the state to learn about labor market data and have an opportunity to use this data to engage business and industry.
- (4) Invest in additional employer validation efforts to ensure CTE programs impart industry-relevant skills, focusing on areas such as maritime and healthcare, where employers would like to bring existing guided pathway programs to scale.

The Guided Pathways Collaborative has identified comprehensive career guidance and planning at the high school level as a priority for future study and investment, including building an online portal for students to create and store their High School and Beyond Plans and link them to CareerBridge.com and the work-based learning opportunity database currently under construction. Discussions are underway to make the High School and Beyond Plan a more useful pathway planning document for students to use upon enrollment in education and training after high school.

Focus on Defining “Career Readiness” in Partnership with Business and Labor Stakeholders

A new partnership between the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Workforce Board is providing an opportunity for the Workforce Board to share expertise in career-connected learning policy and best practices. SBE is responsible for setting policy in Washington’s K-12 schools. The two boards are now collaborating to produce a statewide definition and indicators for when graduates are career-ready. Washington’s high school graduates are expected to be ready for “colleges, careers, and life.” But the dominant focus has been on college readiness, with college readiness indicators regularly integrated into course curriculum approved by SBE and OSPI.

Washington has not yet developed a set of indicators to demonstrate a graduate’s readiness to begin a career leading to economic self-sufficiency. In the future, career readiness indicators can be integrated into both in Career and Technical Education (CTE) and traditional academic education courses, as well as state education policy. Moreover, SBE intends to explore integrating career readiness indicators into the state’s “education accountability framework,” to measure how effectively schools are placing their graduates on a path to economic self-sufficiency.

Other Career Tools for In-School Youth

CareerBridge.wa.gov – This free, online tool helps students explore occupations that align with their interests and connects these occupations to education and training programs that prepare them for a career. The site, created and administered by the Workforce Board, features over 6,500 public and private education programs in Washington and provides statewide labor market data on how much jobs pay and whether demand for those jobs is growing or shrinking. Career Bridge also provides performance data for approximately 40 percent of the listed programs, a “consumer report” that lets users see how many students completed a program, how many landed jobs, and how much they earned. The site also includes a “Pay for School” section so students can find ways to make education affordable.



ReadySetGrad.org – This website was launched in 2013 by the WSAC. The site spans sixth grade through college as well as continuing education programs. The site was created to help students gain access to tools, information, and support to graduate high school and make postsecondary education and training accessible and affordable.

Reaching Out-of-School and Older Youth

Earn and Learn Options Provide Job Skills and Connections for Students

Early work experience is critical to getting young people better connected to jobs and to their next education steps. Through work experience they gain soft skills, learn to work under supervision, and gain a solid understanding of how increasing education and training leads to a solid career path. However, for many young people, work experience ideally needs to come with a paycheck. Without this financial support, it can be difficult for young Washingtonians to

seek out this critical connection to the workplace. In some cases, they are helping their families pay the bills or providing other assistance, such as childcare for younger siblings.

Broadly speaking, earn-and-learn models center on programs that meet the needs of industry and include options such as on-the-job training, paid internships, and registered apprenticeships.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

With OJT, workers earn money while gaining job skills and an income. OJT's stated goal is to have participants become permanent employees at the end of the training. In an OJT, a contract with definitive milestones is drawn up between the employer, the employee, and the organization subsidizing the training. Typically, an employer is paid up to 50 percent of the wages for the costs of training and supervision. Most OJTs last anywhere from three to nine months. In Washington, most OJTs are paid via state and contracted organizations using federal dollars.¹⁸

Paid Internships

Although work experience is valuable—whether paid or unpaid—internships that also provide a paycheck help more youth access this opportunity. The New York Times reported that internships are growing rapidly across the U.S. but that many of them are unpaid, causing an uneven playing field between those with means and those from less financially secure backgrounds

In any case, internships that provide a paycheck are far more accessible and valuable for a greater number of young people. New websites have sprung up to help make these matches, such as InternMatch, or been added to existing sites, such as SimplyHired.

Apprenticeships

The most successful earn-and-learn model is apprenticeship, where those who are in training are paid while advancing up a definitive career ladder that leads to living wage jobs. The Workforce Board's evaluation of apprenticeship in the 2014 edition of *Workforce Training Results* showed those who complete a Washington apprenticeship program earned nearly \$64,000 per year, with an employment rate among completers of 84 percent.

¹⁸ The Employment Security Department has resources to find on-the-job training opportunities at http://www.wa.gov/esd/1stop/technical_assistance/additional_resources.htm

Talent and Prosperity for All Plan (TAP) Promises Stronger Partnerships

In 2014, Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which replaced the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). The new act, parts of which took effect in 2015, promises a renewed focus on youth, in particular, older, out-of-school youth. WIOA also includes the capacity to more effectively coordinate programs that serve low-income and disadvantaged populations and focus more closely on boosting employment and earnings through a coordinated, comprehensive system. Special funding is also provided to assist youth with disabilities to effectively transition to adulthood and gainful employment.

WIOA requires local Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) to spend at least 75 percent of youth grant funds on out-of-school youth, compared to 30 percent under WIA. WIOA also places a new priority on work-based learning by requiring that at least 20 percent of local youth grant funds (for both in-school and out-of-school services) be used for paid and unpaid work experiences that have as a component both academic and occupational education. Investments may include: summer and year-round employment opportunities, pre-apprenticeship programs, internships, job shadowing, and on-the-job training.

WIOA provides more leverage in helping youth who have dropped out of high school, many of whom are discouraged and disconnected from either work or education. Re-engaging these youth, who are likely to be unemployed or struggling to hold onto low-wage jobs, is a key feature of WIOA. The new act extended the age of “youth” to 24 (previously capped at age 21) to more accurately reflect the struggles of those in their early 20s who haven’t connected to education and careers. WIOA also provides both the funding and policy framework to focus on drop-out prevention that promises to help more youth stay in school and on track through career-connected learning opportunities such as paid work experience, internships, job shadows, and other opportunities that move young people forward on a career path that makes sense for them.

Statewide, the transition to WIOA’s focus on serving out-of-school, “disengaged” youth has led to growing partnerships between local WDCs and Open Doors dropout-reengagement programs established by school districts. Local WDCs have been embracing Open Doors



Talent and Prosperity for All (TAP) is the state’s strategic plan for workforce development. A centerpiece of this plan is the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which effectively pushed the “reset button” on Washington’s workforce system’s services.

programs and building relationships with local school districts as an avenue to serving out-of-school youth with WIOA funds, leveraging flexible training resources from WIOA Youth funds to supplement the Open Doors program each student and provide comprehensive wrap-around services and additional work-based learning opportunities for participants.

WIOA also engages employers and calls upon business owners to create internships, job shadows, and other opportunities that engage youth and provide them with valuable supervision and encouragement in the workplace. A more flexible system, in turn, helps vulnerable youth obtain education in discreet segments, gain work experience, then return for more education, with the necessary support and assistance through age 24. This will allow more of our youth to persist and attain necessary industry-recognized certificates and credentials.

Through 2015 and 2016, the Workforce Board has coordinated implementation of Washington's strategic plan for workforce development, *Talent and Prosperity for All*, the first edition of the state plan to operate under WIOA. The Board has organized six implementation committees, currently working to achieve the plan's goals and align state policy to put more workers on paths to economic self-sufficiency while forging stronger sustained partnerships with business and industry to serve their skills needs over time. The committees focus on integrating services seamlessly for customers, ensuring universal accessibility of workforce development services and facilities, deepening and coordinating engagement with employers, ensuring performance accountability of programs, developing an efficient common intake process for customers using services, and identifying appropriate professional development for program staff. Find out more about TAP Implementation at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/WAWorkforcePlan.asp>.

WIOA Implementation Focuses on Navigating Young People to Services Quickly and Seamlessly

The Integrated Service Delivery (TAP Implementation Committee) was specifically tasked to improve the customer experience at WorkSource employment centers, and across the workforce training and education system, by streamlining service planning toward customer goals and accelerating the time from intake to meaningful results. This includes braiding of service resources and making it easier for individuals to navigate available services towards economic self-sufficiency. This work will include establishing a workforce of "navigators" who will work as a single point of contact for jobseekers/workers who need to use multiple services in order to meet their goals. The committee established a workgroup focused specifically on navigators for youth, recognizing that their needs vary significantly from adults entering the WorkSource system seeking employment. This workgroup will define the roles and

responsibilities for youth navigators. They will identify the resources to facilitate youth connection to a career pathway, including education, training, pre-apprenticeship, and career-connected learning.

TAP Planning Generated System Consensus on Importance of Career Pathway Development

During the creation of the TAP plan, the state's workforce development system partners committed to developing common definitions of core concepts, such as a common definition for career pathways that will be integrated into strategic plans of each TAP partner agency, local WDC, and in future state policy:

The career pathway approach connects levels of education, training, counseling, support services, and credentials for specific occupations in a way that optimizes continuous progress toward the education, employment, and career goals of individuals of all ages, abilities, and needs. This approach helps individuals earn marketable credentials; prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships and other work-based learning opportunities; engages individuals in further education and employment; and helps individuals achieve sustained economic success. Career pathways deeply engage employers and help meet their workforce needs; they also help the state and its communities strengthen their workforces and economies.

Career Planning Provides Students with Roadmap

While career guidance helps students think about the future, career planning focuses on the roadmap to get there, including the necessary education and training. It is not enough for students to know what they want to be when they grow up; they need to understand the steps necessary to advance to that chosen career, from initial education to more advanced education and training that leads to positions with room for advancement.

It's important that students and their families regularly review and update a student's career plan with counselors and teachers. This helps ensure students take full advantage of available classes and resources, and that they have looked at a wide range of career and education options.

Advance CTE, a national consortium that represents Career and Technical Education, has organized career opportunities into 16 Career Clusters. Each cluster contains multiple, related

careers that help students discover what they like to do, how their interests align with a variety of occupations, and how to navigate their way to college and/or a career.¹⁹

Career Clusters are further broken down into Career Pathways that provide more specific detail about opportunities within a Career Cluster. For example, Registered Nurse, Physical Therapist, and Optician are all pathways within the larger Health Science Career Cluster. Once students begin exploring a specific Career Cluster or Pathway, they can take courses that prepare them for the pathway, and capitalize on available career-connected learning opportunities.

Career-Connected Learning Prepares Students for World of Work

Career-connected learning opportunities include a range of experiences, including but not limited to:

- Connecting a student with employers for informational interviews.
- Visiting a worksite.
- Participating in a paid internship in a career area of interest.
- Working with a mentor who can help the student navigate their career and education pathways.

There are a number of creative alternatives for career-connected learning within this spectrum. The most important aspect of any career-connected learning opportunity is that students have the ability to explore the world of work in a safe learning environment.

Career-connected learning opportunities should be in line with a developed and detailed plan of coursework that is tailored to the individual student and prepares them for success in a high-demand field. By participating in career-connected learning opportunities at every stage of their educational journey—starting with elementary school on into middle school, and through high school and beyond—young people gain knowledge that informs their decisions about long-term career and life goals. With career-connected learning, students become aware of how their education relates to a career, which, in turn, strengthens their resolve to continue with their education and earn a career-related degree or credential.²⁰

Career-connected learning opportunities are offered throughout the state. However, many are limited to a specific region, sector, or employer and, thus, are not accessible to all students.

Perhaps the most common form of career-connected learning is Career and Technical Education (CTE). Currently, CTE programs are available to students in 233 school districts (out of

¹⁹ Advance CTE (2012, November). Career Clusters. Retrieved from CareerTech.org: <http://www.careertech.org/career-clusters/>.

²⁰Thomas Raymond Bailey, K. L. (2004). Working Knowledge: Work-Based Learning and Education Reform. Routledge Falmer.

295 total school districts), either in comprehensive high schools or at 14 regional Skills Centers throughout the state. Curriculum at Skills Centers is contextualized to a particular occupation or career cluster, and integrates hands-on, applied learning opportunities. CTE is a planned program of courses and learning experiences that begins with the exploration of career options, supports basic academic and life skills, and enables achievement of high academic standards through relevant, career-focused education. Some 79 percent of Washington students who completed a sequence of CTE courses furthered their education after high school or entered employment.²¹

National Governors Association Policy Academy on Work-Based Learning: Ensuring High-Quality Career Connected Learning for all Students

In 2014, Washington was chosen by the National Governors Association as one of six “policy academy” states that will be working collaboratively through mid-2017 to design a policy framework that increases access to work-based and career-connected learning for youth ages 16-29, particularly in STEM fields.

The state’s Workforce Board organized a network of stakeholders, including a core team co-chaired by the Workforce Board and the Governor’s Office consisting of education agency policy stakeholders, representatives of labor and business organizations, professional technical organizations, the state’s career and technical colleges and four-year institutions of higher education, school counselors, career and technical educators, and others. The policy academy partnered with Washington STEM to designate and visit 20+ “Learning Labs,” local work-based learning programs, and will identify and disseminate best practices exhibited by high-quality work-based learning opportunities. The policy academy culminates in a Governor’s Summit on Work-Based Learning in May 2017 where the academy’s policy framework for increasing work-based learning opportunities for young people will debut, and Learning Lab programs will be showcased to stakeholders from around the state.

The policy academy also undertook an “environmental scan” of work-based learning opportunities available to young people in Washington, developing a survey of school districts, industry, and other stakeholders that resulted in an initial catalogue of work-based learning programs operating across the state. The environmental scan compiled information on existing programs, including industry focus, size, employer participation, investment, connection with the state education and workforce systems, outcomes, current and potential scalability/replicability, and other information relating to program quality.

²¹ Workforce Training Results, 2015. Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board.

Employer and Business Engagement Essential to Success

Although CTE provides a solid foundation for students inside the classroom, a more comprehensive solution requires robust partnerships among education leaders and employers outside of the classroom. A recent report by the Annie E. Casey Foundation suggested that in many past initiatives, the role of the private sector in young adult policy has been more symbolic than substantive. Indeed, industry and education policymakers are often unsure of how to collaboratively engage their education community to create career-connected learning opportunities. State level leadership and investment in brokering and supporting this learning would make these types of experiences more universally accessible to all Washington students. Addressing the challenge at hand will require greater involvement on the part of business leaders, and expanded public policy incentives.²²

This support also calls for educators to get more involved with local employers. Many educators have spent their professional lives working in schools. To better connect students with careers, it's important that teachers, counselors, and administrators gain a better understanding of the labor market and the current skills required by those who are hiring.

Spokane's Teaching the Teachers program illustrates how to accomplish this goal. Teachers, counselors, and administrators get an on-site, real-life look at local businesses and a better understanding of the kinds of jobs employers are seeking to fill. They then take that career information back to share with their students. The program, which launched in 2007, was created and is administered by Greater Spokane, Inc. (GSI), which brings together the Spokane Chamber of Commerce and the region's Economic Development Council. The workshops last three hours or more and teachers receive clock hours as part of their professional development. The Spokane Business Foundation pays the cost for the teachers and provides them with clock hours through the regional Educational Service District.

Educators from the 15 school districts in Spokane County, as well as throughout the Spokane region, have participated in the program, which served 180 teachers in 2015.

<http://www.greaterspokane.org/teaching-the-teachers.html>.

In 2014, Greater Spokane, Inc. launched Business After School, a series of two-hour workshops aimed at eighth through 12th grade students. Member businesses of GSI open their door to students, typically 100 to 150 per week, to show students their workplace, and meet with students and parents to share what it takes to work in certain industries. The program provides five "Industry Weeks." Engineering was the focus in February 2014, followed by Healthcare,

²² Annie E Casey Foundation. (2012). Youth and Work: Restoring Teen and Young Adult Connections to Opportunity. Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Manufacturing, Agri-business and Computer Science.

<http://www.greaterspokane.org/business-afterschool.html>.

Programs such as Teaching the Teachers and Business After School require a strong relationship between business leaders and schools to better facilitate career-focused learning opportunities for both teachers and students. Business and labor leaders should be encouraged to look for more opportunities to connect with schools in a way that best accommodates packed schedules and a fast-paced work environment. These connections can promote the creation of more career-connected learning opportunities and provide a forum for exchanging ideas and expertise between local business and labor communities, public schools, apprenticeship councils, and institutions of higher education.

Workforce Development Councils Tackle Youth Unemployment

In Washington, local WDCs focus on building partnerships between employers, educators, and job seekers of all ages. The state's 12 WDCs are governed by industry-led boards and focus on a specific workforce area. Certified by the Governor, with agreement from local elected officials, WDCs provide unique insight and expertise in addressing chronic problems such as high rates of youth unemployment. WDCs are tackling high rates of youth unemployment in areas around the state. These regional efforts provide a good starting point for what a statewide initiative might look like.

Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools

In 2016, the Washington State Legislature charged the Workforce Board with convening an advisory committee to develop a plan for a "Career and College Ready Lighthouse School" Program. "Lighthouse Schools" provide technical assistance and advice to other schools and communities in the initial stages of creating a learning environment focused on ensuring student readiness for college and careers. The Workforce Board was also tasked with helping ensure a Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools program would provide students opportunities to:

1. Explore and understand career opportunities through applied learning.
2. Engage with industry mentors.
3. Plan for career and college success.

In September of 2016, the Workforce Board convened a meeting of the National Governors Association Policy Academy Team where participants received a briefing on the Lighthouse Schools concept. Participants were invited to participate in small group discussions to identify elements of school programs that successfully connect students to applied learning, industry

mentors and the opportunities listed above. The Workforce Board also created a Career Readiness Work Group to focus policy development efforts and briefed the group on Lighthouse Schools and received their feedback.

An existing STEM Lighthouse Schools program operated by OSPI was examined as a model for the Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools plan. Recognizing a growing skills gap in science, technology, engineering and math, the Legislature passed House Bill 2621 in 2010, creating STEM Lighthouse Schools. The bill directed OSPI to designate as many as three middle and three high schools each year as “Lighthouse Schools” in STEM fields. Designated schools must have proven experience and be recognized as model programs. STEM Lighthouse School designees receive a grant award of up to \$20,000 to support their work as a Lighthouse school during their year of designation.

Schools designated as Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools would serve the same mentorship function as STEM Lighthouses serve for districts seeking to establish effective STEM programs. To that end, the agency responsible for designating Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools and administering the program must be prepared to facilitate a community of learning and create a forum to catalogue and disseminate best practices, such as an online database or forum.

A future legislative action mandating the creation of a Career and College Ready Lighthouse School plan would need to specify how many schools should be designated, and specify whether designated schools would obtain a grant award. Schools that receive the STEM Lighthouse School designation are awarded a small grant to share best practices, proven strategies, and materials with other school districts, and to serve as a “mentor” to schools seeking to implement such programs. Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools would preferably receive a similar grant award, subject to appropriation of the Legislature.

The Career Academy Model

Since 1969, the National Career Academy Coalition (NCAC) has studied and refined policy frameworks for implementing high school level “career academies.”

Career academies are designed to prepare students for both college and careers. They are schools within schools that link students with peers, teachers, and community partners in a structured environment that fosters academic success. Often, the strongest career academies have a CTE program as their core.

The career academy concept has four key elements central to development and implementation:

- A small learning community (SLC).
- A college-prep sequential curriculum with a career theme.
- An advisory board that forges partnerships with employers, higher education institutions, and the broader community.
- A sequenced, comprehensive work-based learning component.

Washington's other Lighthouse School program, for STEM Lighthouse schools, adopted the NCAC model as their standard for designating Lighthouse schools to provide technical assistance and advice to other schools and communities building STEM learning environments. STEM Lighthouse Schools serve as resources on how to combine best practices in creating small, highly personalized learning communities, an interdisciplinary STEM-focused curriculum delivered through a project-based instructional approach, and active partnerships with the business and local community.²³

Elements of a Career and College Ready Lighthouse School

NCAC has developed National Standards of Practice for Career Academies in collaboration with several nationally recognized groups, including the Association for Career and Technical Education, the College and Career Academy Support Network, ConnectEd, the Southern Regional Education Board, and AdvanceCTE (the association of state directors of career and technical education), and most recently updated their proposed standards in 2013.²⁴ **These standards of practice would serve as ideal criteria for identifying future Career and College Ready Lighthouse School awardees.**

As a first step, any district or school interested in applying for Lighthouse School designation should convene an industry advisory board with employers, community stakeholders, and, ideally, representatives from local higher education institutions. NCAC requires career academies to demonstrate various commitments to the design, governance structure, and sustainability of any academy program. The same elements would be useful to any agency that ultimately designates Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools as a list of criteria for designation. Schools that successfully apply for Career and College Ready Lighthouse School designation should address and demonstrate best practices related to the following indicators:

²³ STEM Lighthouse Schools were created after the Legislature's passage of HB 2621 in 2010. The bill directed OSPI to designate as many as three middle and three high schools each year as "Lighthouse Schools" in STEM fields. Designated schools must have proven experience and be recognized as model programs. STEM Lighthouse School designees receive a grant award of up to \$20,000.

²⁴ http://www.ncacinc.com/sites/default/files/media/documents/nsop_with_cover.pdf

Defined Mission and Goals: Lighthouse Schools should have a written definition of their mission, goals, and benchmarks, to be developed jointly by administrators, teachers, parents, the industry advisory board, and other stakeholders. The mission and goals should speak to a firm commitment to equity, stakeholder involvement, ensuring readiness for postsecondary education *and* careers, and to a focus on raising students' achievement and motivation to plan for future college and career success.

Academy Design: Career academies traditionally look like small learning communities organized within a larger high school. Washington has several pioneering high schools that have already developed an industry specific focus across their entire curriculum, particularly in STEM fields.

Support of the Host Community/District: Schools seeking designation as a Career and College Ready Lighthouse School should note the support of their school board and superintendent, principal and administration, and demonstrate the district and school's commitment to provide adequate funding, facilities, equipment, and materials to their student, including opportunities for student internships, early college and career entry options, and technical training.

Faculty and Staff: Faculty should be integral to the academy development and design process, and the advisory board coordinating the program. School counselors should be full members of the academy team, well-versed in the mission and goals of the academy and consulted in the development of strategies the school is employing to ensure college and career readiness.

Professional Development and Continuous Learning: Successful College and Career Ready Lighthouse Schools shall demonstrate consideration of a professional development/continuous learning strategy for staff.

Governance and Leadership: Specifying the explicit roles of all stakeholders and leaders of the College and Career Ready Lighthouse School's advisory board members is important, including specifying the frequency of meetings and expectations of meeting outcomes.

Teaching and Learning: NCAC requires teaching and learning within a career academy to meet or exceeds external standards and college entrance requirements, while differing from a comprehensive high school by focusing learning around ensuring career readiness.

Employer, Postsecondary Education, and Community Involvement: Any successful College and Career Ready Lighthouse School should demonstrate how the school links to its host

community and involves employers, postsecondary education representatives, and the community in the development of the program. College and Career Ready Lighthouse Schools must particularly focus on demonstrating a strategy to increase and diversify their offering of work-based learning opportunities for students.

Student Assessment: Data must be used to ensure students are showing improvement in career and college readiness. Successful Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools should ensure students are progressing both in terms of acquisition of required academic skills and in acquisition of technical skills or skills relevant to their chosen career pathway. Where appropriate, industry-recognized credentials, certifications, and licenses should be incorporated.

Sustainability: A plan to regularly assess the Lighthouse Schools' career readiness strategies for effectiveness, and a methodology to sustain success and make refinements will be critical. Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools must be prepared to demonstrate their development and implementation of improvements to their program over time, supported by data and evidence.

Diversifying Offerings of Work-Based Learning Experiences is Critical

The Workforce Board's advisory group participants stressed the importance of work-based learning as a critical avenue for cultivating skills needed for future career and college success. Workgroup participants agreed that any career and college readiness "best practice" school would provide students with a varied menu of methods and environments of instruction, including: internships (especially paid internships), job shadows, on-the-job training, and community jobs/service opportunities, and extended learning opportunities outside the school day or year (including summer learning options).

Summary

Though the youth unemployment rate in Washington has dropped notably in the past two years, a comprehensive solution must ensure all of Washington's youth have access to, and are encouraged to participate in, career-connected learning opportunities that help them make sense of their talents and abilities, explore their interests both inside and outside the classroom, and forge pathways to the education and training that will lead them to solid careers and productive lives.

Unemployment among young people could be proactively addressed with the establishment of Career and College Ready Lighthouse Schools, which could be readily designated using criteria established by the NCAC's Career Academies model and adapted by Washington's existing STEM Lighthouse Schools program.

This report and previous reports on young adult unemployment can be found at <http://www.wtb.wa.gov/YoungAdults--Employment.asp>.