

COLORADO



State Highlight

ICAP Awards. Colorado recognizes exemplary ICAP implementation with their annual [ICAP Awards](#). The state features ICAP teams and promising practices on its website, showing how districts and schools have ensured meaningful ICAP experiences for students. Colorado recently expanded these awards to include a Student Award for those committed to the ICAP process.



VISION



State Vision. Colorado's [strategic vision for career and technical education](#) places career advisement and development as the first goal. The Secondary, Postsecondary, and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force (1215 Task Force) also published an [interim report](#) that identifies the need to train and provide resources for all school staff to help learners with career exploration and to develop guided opportunities for elementary and middle school learners to seamlessly transition through an exploration phase to engage in specialized pathways.

Colorado has yet to define career exploration.



POLICY



Perkins State Plan. Colorado's [Perkins V state plan](#) requires districts to offer middle school career exploration opportunities within programs, including career counseling, career planning, and worksite tours.

Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP). High school students are [required](#) to complete an ICAP, with the option of developing their plan as early as elementary or middle school, for which Colorado has developed [standards](#) and quality indicators.

Colorado has yet to establish career exploration requirements for students or formally include middle school career exploration in state or federal accountability systems.



INFRASTRUCTURE



Middle School Indicators. The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) provides [middle school quality indicators](#) for ICAPs. The guidance outlines the indicators and various competencies or skills a student should be able to demonstrate.




PWR Playbook. The Colorado Department of Education provides a [Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness \(PWR\) Playbook](#) to support the implementation of high-quality ICAP for students. The Playbook provides background and guidance on ICAP and PWR practices and resources.

Colorado has yet to include middle school career exploration into data collection processes or provide dynamic training opportunities to staff related to middle school career exploration.





COLORADO • VISION

Category	Status	Description
<p>Leadership</p> <p>Does the state leadership include career exploration as a valued or prioritized component of students' middle school experience?</p>	 <p>Building Emerging Advanced</p>	<p>CO's strategic vision for career and technical education places career advisement and development as the first goal, where the state wants to ensure each CO learner has access to ongoing career advisement and development. In the establishment of the Secondary, Postsecondary, and Work-based Learning Integration Task Force (1215 Task Force), the task force published an interim report that identified several areas for further exploration, including the need to train and provide resources for all school staff to help learners with career exploration and to develop guided opportunities for elementary and middle school learners to seamlessly transition through an exploration phase to engage in specialized pathways. The Task Force has released its final report, which includes legislative recommendations.</p>
<p>Career Exploration Definition</p> <p>Does the state formally define career exploration for middle school students?</p>	 <p>Building Emerging Advanced</p>	<p>CO does not officially define 'career exploration'; however, within CO's Middle School ICAP Quality Indicators, career awareness is defined as the “knowledge of the difference between jobs, occupations, and careers. Awareness of a wide range of local regional, national, and global career pathways and opportunities while giving consideration to economic, cultural influences, and the impact of stereotypes on career choice.”</p>
<p>Advocacy</p> <p>Are there organizations within the state that are advocating for middle school career exploration?</p>	 <p>Building Emerging Advanced</p>	<p>CO does not have any organizations advocating for career exploration that rose to recognition within the landscape.</p>



COLORADO • POLICY

Category	Status	Description
Standards Does the state have policies that establish standard practices for career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	CO's Perkins V state plan requires districts to provide middle school career exploration opportunities within their programs, including career counseling, career planning, and worksite tours. Although there is no policy language that establishes standard practice for middle school career exploration, CO has standards for the ICAP high school requirement, including quality indicators.
Accountability Does the state integrate career exploration into their accountability systems?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The state does not integrate career exploration into its ESSA state plan. However, middle school career exploration activities are formally included in CO's Perkins V Plan .
Student Requirements Does the state have policies that require middle school students to complete career exploration activities?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The state does not require middle school students to participate in career exploration activities; however, high school students are required to complete an ICAP with the option of developing their plan as early as elementary or middle school.
Incentives Does the state have policies that incentivize career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	CDE recognizes exemplary ICAP processes with awards.



COLORADO • INFRASTRUCTURE

Category	Status	Description
Funding Does the state use state or federal funding sources to support career exploration for middle school students?	 Building Emerging Advanced	CO supports the administration of middle school CTE programs through the CO Career and Technical Act . CDE was allocated \$1 million in state funds to advance meaningful career conversations. The funds were used to expand training in career conversations and build a tool to support the ICAP process.
Professional Development Does the state support the training of school counselors (and other school staff) in career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	CO's training and professional development support through meaningful career conversation training . ICAP facilitators are also provided regionally to support counseling in schools.
Material Supports Does the state provide material supports on the implementation of middle school career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	Although most ICAP resources provided through the state focus on high school implementation, the CDE does provide middle school quality indicators for ICAP. The PWR Playbook is a guidebook to support high-quality implementation of ICAP. The department also provides links to middle school educators and the middle school CTE guidance handbook .
Data Collection Does the state collect data on middle school career exploration opportunities in the state?	 Building Emerging Advanced	There are no formal state-level data collection practices related to middle school career exploration.
CTSOs Does the state support student participation in career and technical student organizations?	 Building Emerging Advanced	CO has middle school chapters in TSA, SkillsUSA, FBLA, FCCLA, and FFA.
Organizations Are there organizations within the state that support career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	TalentFOUND connects individuals and businesses with the most relevant tools and resources of the Colorado talent development network, helping students, job seekers, workers, and employers create their own unique paths to career and business success. Youthentity is a non-profit that aims to help students in grades 5 through 8 prepare for successful futures through financial education and career readiness.