



MONTANA



★ State Highlight

Montana Advanced Opportunity Act. The Montana Advanced Opportunity Act expands personalized CTE opportunities for middle and high school students. As part of the Act, the Montana legislature authorizes school boards to develop initiatives that provide state funding for advanced educational opportunities and individualized pathways for career and postsecondary opportunities.



VISION



State-supported CTSOs. The Montana Legislature passed HB 382, which outlines the state-supported CTSOs and specifies appropriations to support these organizations. In addition, the Montana Office of Public Instruction's Montana Ready Initiative uses regional career coaches to facilitate CTSO activities, implement work-based learning, and help all students be ready for college, career, community, and life.

MT has yet to define and codify its definition of career exploration.



POLICY



Standards for Workplace Competencies. Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) created the Montana Standards for Workplace Competencies that outline what competencies students should master by the end of grade 4, grade 8, and upon graduation. These standards are in addition to Montana's content standards for career and technical education for students K-12.

MT has yet to establish career exploration requirements connected to high school and formally include middle school career exploration in state and federal accountability systems.



INFRASTRUCTURE



State and Federal Funding. Montana leverages a variety of funding sources to support career exploration activities. Montana requires Perkins V recipients to use federal dollars to provide career exploration, guidance activities, and work-based learning opportunities. The state funds Montana Career Lab, an online platform that provides resources for students and parents and tools for educators and job seekers. Montana also provides financial incentives to middle school chapters of CTSOs, including FCCLA and TSA. The state also provides financial incentives to support these organizations.

MT has yet to provide dynamic training opportunities to staff related to middle school career exploration.



Full Report



MONTANA • VISION

Category	Status	Description
Leadership Does the state leadership include career exploration as a valued or prioritized component of students' middle school experience?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The MT Legislature passed HB 382 , which outlines the state-supported CTSOs and specifies appropriations to support these organizations, including a CTSO performance grant opportunity. In addition, OPI's Montana Ready Initiative uses regional career coaches to facilitate CTSO activities, implement work-based learning, and help all students prepare for college, career, community, and life.
Career Exploration Definition Does the state formally define career exploration for middle school students?	 Building Emerging Advanced	MT defines career-related concepts, such as work-based learning , but does not have a specific definition for middle school career exploration.
Advocacy Are there organizations within the state that are advocating for middle school career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	MT does not have any organizations advocating for middle school career exploration that rose to recognition within the landscape scan.



MONTANA • POLICY

Category	Status	Description
Standards Does the state have policies that establish standard practices for career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	In addition to CTE content standards , MT has Standards for Workplace Competency , including benchmarks for middle school students for workplace competencies and career planning. The state also has a work-based learning manual that promotes extended learning experiences, including career awareness, exploration, preparation, and training.
Accountability Does the state integrate career exploration into their accountability systems?	 Building Emerging Advanced	MT's Perkins V Plan outlines requirements for LEAs to collaborate with local workforce partners to provide career exploration/guidance activities and work-based learning opportunities but does not explicitly address middle grades. The plan also has a program quality indicator for high school students' WBL participation but does not calculate middle school students.
Student Requirements Does the state have policies that require middle school students to complete career exploration activities?	 Building Emerging Advanced	While MT has standards to guide career planning for middle school students, there are no associated requirements for middle school students.
Incentives Does the state have policies that incentivize career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The Montana Advanced Opportunity Act expands personalized career and technical education opportunities for middle and high school students. As part of the act, the MT legislature authorizes school boards to develop initiatives that provide state funding for advanced educational opportunities and individualized pathways for career and postsecondary opportunities.



MONTANA • INFRASTRUCTURE

Category	Status	Description
Funding Does the state use state or federal funding sources to support career exploration for middle school students?		MT financially supports Montana Career Lab , a platform with career exploration activities. The state has also appropriated state dollars to fund activities of CTSOs. MT also requires Perkins V recipients to use federal dollars to provide career exploration/guidance activities and work-based learning opportunities.
Professional Development Does the state support the training of school counselors (and other school staff) in career exploration?		While MT OPI links to external resources for CTE professional development, the state does not provide trainings specifically on middle school career exploration.
Material Supports Does the state provide material supports on the implementation of middle school career exploration?		The Montana Personalized Career Plan is designed to help educators incorporate career development into their K-12 curriculum. This career development plan considers the whole child's needs and includes the MT OPI CTE standards. In addition, the MCIS Junior Implementation Framework guides educators and classroom-based career development instruction. Finally, the What to Pack middle school resources is a guide that helps students explore their interests and aptitudes and see how they relate to different career fields.
Data Collection Does the state collect data on middle school career exploration opportunities in the state?		MT collects data on CTE concentrators and CTSO participation , but does not collect data on middle school career exploration activities.
CTSOs Does the state support participation in career and technical student organizations?		MT supports CTSOs , including two that have middle school chapters: FCCLA and TSA. The state also provides financial incentives to support these organizations.
Organizations Are there organizations within the state that support career exploration in middle schools?		Montana Youth Transitions is an organization that aims to improve transition services and increase the number of youth with disabilities who achieve their desired post-school outcomes. They provide resources to help with career exploration. The University of Montana Rural Institute also has resources to support the development of a middle school portfolio .