



PENNSYLVANIA



★ State Highlight

Accountability for Career Exploration. Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) included a measure of students' career exploration in the state's accountability systems through the [Future Ready PA Index](#) and [ESSA](#). For middle school, PA measures the percentage of 8th-grade students who create an individualized career plan and participate in career preparation activities aligned with the Career Education and Work (CEW) standards.



VISION



Career Ready PA. [Career Ready PA](#) is a PDE initiative that facilitates cross-sector collaboration, training, best practices, and resources to support educators in helping students develop employability skills.

State Grants. The Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) supports [PAsmart](#), which provides grant opportunities to promote career exploration in CS/STEM. The governor announced another grant opportunity, the [Manufacturing PA Training-to-Career \(MTTC\) grant](#), to support middle school career exploration programming.



POLICY



Required Career Education. Pennsylvania [code](#) requires that middle school students be provided career education, including exposure to various career options and the educational preparation to achieve those options.

District Guidance Plans. [Chapter 339](#) of PA Code requires districts to write a guidance plan for developing and implementing a comprehensive, sequential program of guidance services for kindergarten through 12th grade. Services specified under the program include providing occupational and educational information needed for realistic career planning in an organized, systematic fashion for students, parents, and teachers.



INFRASTRUCTURE



Funding. Pennsylvania allows LEAs to use [Title I dollars](#) to support college and career exploration and advising, including hiring school counselors and other support staff to help students gain the information and tools they need to gain awareness of college and career pathways and make informed decisions regarding their postsecondary future. The DLI issues [Business Education Partnership Grants](#) that provide career-related experiences and exposure through soft skills development, internships, career mentoring, and career tours.

State Resources. PDE provides a wealth of support to facilitate middle school career exploration, including [Career Standards Benchmark Guidance](#) and [implementation strategies](#), resources for [8th-grade benchmarks](#), [curriculum resources](#), and a [work-based learning toolkit](#).





PENNSYLVANIA • 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	<u>Career Ready PA</u> is an initiative of the PDE that facilitates cross-sector collaboration, training, best practices, and resources to support educators in helping students develop employability skills. The <u>Career Ready PA Coalition</u> ensures that each region in the state is supported by a Career Ready PA liaison point of contact for training, resources, and stakeholder connections. The DLI supports <u>PAsmart</u> , a statewide movement for accountability, readiness, and training to help students and workers prepare for the jobs of today and tomorrow; this initiative also includes grant opportunities to promote career exploration in CS/STEM. The governor announced another grant opportunity, the <u>MTTC grant</u> , to support middle school career exploration programming.
Career Exploration Definition Does the state formally define career exploration for middle school students?	 Building Emerging Advanced	PA <u>code</u> outlines requirements for career education for middle school students.
Advocacy Are there organizations within the state that are advocating for middle school career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	<u>Partnership for Career Development</u> works to build a system of K-12 career education, increase awareness of postsecondary training and education opportunities, and strengthen workforce development in the Pennsylvania Capital Region. This organization creates the <u>Cradle to Career Alliance</u> and the <u>STEM Collaborative Alliance for Learning Equitably</u> .



PENNSYLVANIA • POLICY

Category	Status	Description
Standards Does the state have policies that establish standard practices for career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	PA Career Standards require <u>middle-level education</u> to include career education, exposure to various career options, and the educational preparation necessary to achieve those options. To support this, PA developed <u>Career Education and Work (CEW) Standards</u> that describe what students should know and be able to do in the workplace. These standards require all students to have a <u>career portfolio</u> beginning in grade 8 and continuing until graduation. In addition, <u>Chapter 339</u> of PA Code requires districts to write a guidance plan for the development and implementation of a comprehensive, sequential program of guidance services for grades K-12. Services specified under the program include providing occupational and educational information needed for realistic career planning in an organized, systematic fashion for students, parents, and teachers.
Accountability Does the state integrate career exploration into their accountability systems?	 Building Emerging Advanced	To help ensure that all students in PA are on track for meaningful postsecondary engagement and success, PDE included a measure of students' career exploration, preparation, and readiness as part of PA's state and federal accountability system through the <u>Future Ready PA Index</u> and <u>ESSA</u> . The Career Readiness Indicator recognizes efforts to ensure that all students have access to career exploration and preparation activities that are standards-aligned and evidence-based. For middle school, PA measures the percentage of students who create an individualized career plan by the end of grade 8 and participate in career preparation activities aligned to the CEW standards. The Industry-based Learning Indicator also measures work-based learning from grades 7-11.
Student Requirements Does the state have policies that require middle school students to complete career exploration activities?	 Building Emerging Advanced	PA requires all students to have a <u>career portfolio</u> beginning in the 8th grade and continuing until graduation. A career portfolio is a tool for students to help them think through and plan for their future education and career, whether electronic or paper and pencil.
Incentives Does the state have policies that incentivize career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	PA has created financial incentives for middle schools to incorporate career exploration programming into their schools. For example, the PAsmart initiative provides <u>targeted and advancing grants</u> to expose students to CS/STEM opportunities. The state also provides an <u>MTTC grant</u> to support programs for grades 5-12 students, including YES! (Your Economic Success!) It provides middle school activities that help students understand how financial and career decisions impact their lives as adults, and Junior Achievement Inspire, which helps students identify career clusters and jobs of interest, identify regional employers, and connect with postsecondary opportunities.



PENNSYLVANIA • 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	PA supports Pennsylvania CareerZone , a free online tool to assist students with career awareness, exploration, and planning. The state also allows LEAs to use Title I dollars to support college and career exploration and advising. PA DLI provides Business Education Partnership Grants that provide career-related experiences and exposure through activities such as soft skills development and internships to increase opportunities for all youth to participate in work-based learning and similar experiences.
Professional Development Does the state support the training of school counselors (and other school staff) in career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The Career Ready PA Coalition training team provides educators with professional development opportunities that deliver the methodologies, best practices, and resources needed to prepare students for postsecondary success.
Material Supports Does the state provide material supports on the implementation of middle school career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	PDE provides a wealth of support to facilitate middle school career exploration, including Career Standards Benchmark Guidance and implementation strategies , resources for 8th-grade benchmarks , curriculum resources , Career Ready PA resources , and a work-based learning toolkit .
Data Collection Does the state collect data on middle school career exploration opportunities in the state?	 Building Emerging Advanced	The Future Ready PA Index is a collection of school progress measures related to school and student success. The Index includes outcomes for the Career Standards Benchmarks, which also indicate their ESSA plan.
CTSOs Does the state support participation in career and technical student organizations?	 Building Emerging Advanced	Pennsylvania supports CTSOs , five of which have middle school chapters that provide career awareness, leadership, motivation, and recognition for career-related skills with guidelines referenced by PDE: FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA, and TSA.
Organizations Are there organizations within the state that support career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	Remake Learning Days partners with districts and other organizations to host hands-on educational experiences for educators, youth, their families, and caregivers. The Partnership For Career Development is a business-education-partnership intermediary that provides schools and districts in South Central Pennsylvania with resources, programs, events, and initiatives surrounding career exploration and development. Junior Achievement of Western PA and the Consortium for Public Education support educators and students with career exploration activities.