

WASHINGTON

★ State Highlight

High School and Beyond Plan. Washington requires districts to have an electronic High School and Beyond Plan platform accessible to all students. The platform must include identification of education goals and a 4-year plan for courses taken in high school that satisfies graduation requirements and aligns with students' secondary and postsecondary goals.



VISION



State Definition. Washington's revised code defines career awareness and exploration as programs, activities, and events that provide early exposure to jobs and industries. Career awareness and exploration are structured programs that include job fairs, guest speakers, job shadows, jobsite tours, and other similar activities.

Career Guidance Initiative. The Career Connect WA (CCW) initiative promotes K-12 staff provision of career awareness, career exploration, and career preparation opportunities in elementary and middle school.

Washington has yet to commit dollars or coordinate across agencies on career exploration.



POLICY



Comprehensive Guidance and Planning Programs. As issued by legislation, Washington encourages middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools to implement a comprehensive guidance and planning program for all students. The program for middle schools includes a curriculum intended to provide the skills and knowledge students need to select courses, explore options, plan for their future, and take steps to implement their plans. Districts must detail these components in a written plan and ensure that 80% of counselors' time is spent on direct and indirect services to students.



INFRASTRUCTURE






Career Bridge. Washington's Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board created Career Bridge, the state's online, one-stop resource for career and education planning. The site provides resources for exploring careers, including resources for middle school students, information on job trends and educational needs to get in-demand jobs, and resources for paying for school.

Career Guidance Washington Lessons. Career Guidance Washington is guidance and life-planning curriculum for students in Grades 6-12. The activities are designed to help students develop plans for life after high school and learn what they need to accomplish in school to meet those goals.





WASHINGTON • 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	<p>In 2023, the WA Legislature passed Senate Bill 5243, requiring a statewide shift to a universal HSBP platform and moving the start of this graduation requirement to 7th grade. The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has been implementing the first stage of this process to select a vendor to provide a single online platform, ensuring equitable access to the same career exploration and postsecondary preparation tool for all students.</p> <p>In addition, the Career Connect WA (CCW) initiative promotes K-12 staff provision of career awareness, career exploration, and career preparation opportunities in elementary and middle school. One of the key partners in this initiative is Washington STEM, another organization that, like the CCW team, works to promote the importance of K-12 career exploration and quality high school and beyond planning in middle and high school.</p>
Career Exploration Definition Does the state formally define career exploration for middle school students?	 Building Emerging Advanced	<p>WA's revised code defines career awareness and exploration as programs, activities, and events that provide early exposure to jobs and industries. Career awareness and exploration are structured programs that include job fairs, guest speakers, job shadows, jobsite tours, and other similar activities.</p>
Advocacy Are there organizations within the state that are advocating for middle school career exploration?	 Building Emerging Advanced	<p>Ready Washington is a coalition of more than 20 state and local agencies, associations, and advocacy organizations that believe every WA student should graduate high school prepared for a successful future on their chosen education and career path. Their work includes supporting the state's HSBP process.</p>



WASHINGTON • POLICY

Category	Status	Description
Standards Does the state have policies that establish standard practices for career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	WA code requires each school district to have an electronic High School and Beyond Plan platform available to all students, beginning in 7th grade, with the Identification of career goals aided by a skills and interest assessment. The platform must include an Identification of education goals and a plan for courses taken in high school that satisfies graduation requirements and aligns with students' secondary and postsecondary goals, as well as a resume or activity log. In addition, WA offers CTE equivalency courses with standards that address career exploration. Finally, WA also has comprehensive guidance and planning program components in place for middle schools that include a curriculum intended to provide the skills and knowledge students need to select courses, explore options, plan for their future, and take steps to implement their plans. Districts must detail these components in a written plan and ensure that 80% of counselors' time is spent on direct and indirect services to students.
Accountability Does the state integrate career exploration into their accountability systems?	 Building Emerging Advanced	WA does not integrate career exploration into its ESSA state plan. WA's Perkins V Plan does mention career exploration as a component of their CCW initiative, but these do not explicitly address middle school students.
Student Requirements Does the state have policies that require middle school students to complete career exploration activities?	 Building Emerging Advanced	WA code requires each student to have a High School and Beyond Plan , which is initiated during 7th or 8th grade with the administration of a career interest and skills inventory to guide the student's middle and high school experience and inform course-taking that is aligned with the student's goals for education or training and career after high school.
Incentives Does the state have policies that incentivize career exploration in middle schools?	 Building Emerging Advanced	Through the CCW statewide collaborative partnership, OSPI and related staff in all nine regional Education Service Districts (ESDs) support districts by providing career awareness and exploration in middle school. In taking the career interest inventory required as the beginning step of creating an HSBP, students are supported to use their results to inform their 8th-grade course choices, including taking available exploratory or CTE courses related to their career interests.



WASHINGTON • INFRASTRUCTURE

Category	Status	Description
Funding Does the state use state or federal funding sources to support career exploration for middle school students?		WA financially supports Career Bridge , the state's one-stop source for career and education planning, including resources for middle school students. The state supports Career Launch programs , which provide students with real-life work experience related to their classroom studies. WA supports Career Connect Learning Coordinators , who support expanding career-connected learning opportunities. The state also allows Title I dollars to help districts implement the High School and Beyond Plan requirement.
Professional Development Does the state support the training of school counselors (and other school staff) in career exploration?		WA educators can access a statewide webinar on High School and Beyond Planning, including strategies to increase student, staff, family, and community engagement. OSPI provides other training and updates at annual conferences and by request, within existing staff capacity, and sends relevant updates via the monthly Comprehensive School Counseling Program Newsletter.
Material Supports Does the state provide material supports on the implementation of middle school career exploration?		WA provides guidance and resources on the High School and Beyond Planning process, including an FAQ , to help districts implement this requirement. The state also publishes lessons for Career Guidance Washington , a guidance and life-planning curriculum for students in grades 6-12, to help districts facilitate students' career planning.
Data Collection Does the state collect data on middle school career exploration opportunities in the state?		WA's Career Connect Washington Annual Progress Report details data related to this initiative. WA also collects data on district implementation of the High School and Beyond Plan.
CTSOs Does the state support participation in career and technical student organizations?		WA supports CTSOs , six of which have middle school participation: FBLA, FCCLA, FFA, HOSA, SkillsUSA, and TSA.
Organizations Are there organizations within the state that support career exploration in middle schools?		West Sound STEM Network pairs STEM professionals as mentors with small groups of middle school students. Students engage in a hands-on activity designed by their mentor and Q&A time to explore how the mentor found their career pathway.