



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: LESSONS IN CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING FOR YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

A PROJECT OF THE WASHINGTON STATE NATIONAL GOVERNORS
ASSOCIATION POLICY ACADEMY ON WORK BASED LEARNING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

POLICY ACADEMY FOR WORK BASED LEARNING

Washington was one of six states selected to participate in the Policy Academy for Work Based Learning (Policy Academy) through the National Governors Association in 2016. The Policy Academy is co-chaired by Governor Inslee and the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, with leadership from a Core Team of agency and organization stakeholders. The goal of the Policy Academy is to create a policy framework to increase career connected learning for young people, with a focus on middle-skill, STEM jobs. Additional goals include supporting career connected learning by designing a fundable and sustainable infrastructure, creating a performance measurement system, and hosting a Governor's Summit to accelerate and sustain the work statewide.

LEARNING LAB PROJECT

To complement this work, Governor Inslee dedicated funding for the Learning Lab component of the Policy Academy. The Learning Lab component was designed to identify, assess and document promising practices from programs serving a broad cross section of subpopulations, including in-school and out-of-school youth (Opportunity Youth). Washington STEM led the Learning Lab portion of this work.



Seattle Goodwill - Youth Green Corps/Goodwill Youth Corps

ORGANIZING PARADIGMS FOR CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING

Twenty-one career connected learning programs participated in the Learning Lab project. These programs are a cross section of program models, scales, and intensities. They are located in urban areas as well as remote rural areas across Washington. Some have been running for many years while others are just starting to pilot new ideas or strategies. Each participated in a research methodology that included a survey, phone interviews, document review, and site visits.

There are two organizational paradigms to this research and report. First, the Career Connected Learning Framework (Framework) organizes the approach to the programs. Programs fall into one or more of the Framework's broad categories. These are: Career Awareness – program models like worksite tours that help youth learn about the variety of jobs available; Career Exploration – program models like job shadows that inform youth's decisions about further career experiences and educational options; Career Preparation - program models such as internships that give youth opportunities for practical application of work skills; and Career Skills Training & Education – programs such as apprenticeships that prepare youth for specific occupations.

The second paradigm is the Criteria for High-Quality Career Connected Learning (Criteria). These nine criteria are designed to be used flexibly across the entire Framework for both individual programs as well as systems-level initiatives. These Criteria are based on national and state research and are field tested among emerging and existing programs in Washington. They can inform program design and provide a shared language for partners, stakeholders, and funders.

The Criteria are: Equity; Person Centered Approach; Structured Learning Component; Business/Industry & Community Based Connections; Partnership Agreement; Assessment of Effectiveness and Recognition of Skills; Part of a Continuum: Not a Stand-Alone Effort; Design Fidelity; and Sustainability & Implementation at Scale.

FOCUS ON EQUITY

The report highlights one criteria in particular, equity, as a set of intentional strategies that impact all of the other criteria. An equity strategy, as experienced in the Learning Lab research, is a specific focus on identified populations, including communities of color, that have disproportionate outcomes in areas such as educational attainment or access to living wage jobs. These strategies address the effects of historic racism or bias.

The Career Connected Learning field does not have a shared definition or framework to approach equity. There are three main areas of work in the Learning Labs where this research highlighted emerging practices in equity. The Learning Lab programs focus on one or more of these areas: designing programs and evaluation to programmatically address issues such as barriers to access or cultural competency; developing organizational systems to strengthen the organization's response to equity, such as strong community connection or hiring practices; and using advocacy and systems-level responses to address large scale issues of inequity in the community at large.

LESSONS LEARNED

The report summarizes themes and recommendations that highlight promising practices and point to potential solutions to shared problems. There are four overarching themes that are the foundation for the findings: leadership and sustained support that creates a culture where career connected learning is valued is essential for long term success; trusting personal relationships are needed to sustain institutional relationships and to effectively work with youth; programs need to reflect skills and experiences that are directly relevant to the world of work as well as to youth's experiences and goals; and integration and cross-sector collaboration, which require working across institutional boundaries or "siloes," is needed to create quality experiences for youth.

The 21 Learning Lab locations and brief descriptions are as follows:

- **Bellingham:** *Northwest Youth Services* - Vocational Readiness Program engages at-risk, runaway, and homeless youth and young adults with appealing and interactive activities that promote social and practical employment skills.
- **Bremerton:** *West Sound STEM Network, Workforce Development Council, and Olympic Educational Service District 114* – YouthWorks Pathways to Success offers job training services, career counseling, and work experience jobs for underrepresented youth.
- **Federal Way:** *Technology Access Foundation* – TAF Academy College and Career Readiness Program provides school-wide in-class curriculum, classroom speakers, field trips, job shadows, mentorships, and internships for middle and high school students.
- **Nespelem:** Nespelem K-8 is a school based program that brings business and industry employees (e.g., electric linemen and foresters) together with Tribal Council members into the school for career presentations and hand-on experiences.
- **Olympia:** *Evergreen State College /WSDOT Partnership* – Wetlands Monitoring Internship provides field and laboratory experience for college interns in collecting and analyzing environmental data gathered from WSDOT wetland mitigation sites.



Nespelem School - Rural Community Connections

- **Olympia:** *Pacific Education Institute* – FieldSTEM Career Connected Learning is piloting a new program that provided professional development for teachers to integrate locally relevant FieldSTEM work-based learning opportunities into biology, chemistry, and CTE courses.
- **Ocean Shores:** Grays Harbor YouthWorks engages high school students in college-level internships with local businesses to develop “soft skills” that increase the likelihood of success in postsecondary and job pursuits.
- **Renton/Bellevue:** ANEW (Apprenticeship & Non-traditional Employment for Women) addresses gender diversity in the construction workforce and provides programs that tackle the challenges faced in a male dominated industry. They do this through a pre-apprenticeship program focused on proven strategies for improving the pipeline into construction jobs for women and people of color.



ANEW - Trades Rotation Program

- **Seattle:** *Educurious* – Career Connection Program provides Career Connected Learning through the development of interest-driven, work-based problems with students, teachers, and industry professionals.
- **Seattle:** *Seattle Goodwill- Youth Green Corps Program* combines Seattle Parks apprenticeship opportunities with educational planning and skills training for young adults that are neither in school or working.
- **Seattle/Tacoma:** Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee (AJAC) Youth Apprenticeship is a 2,000-hour program designed for high school juniors and seniors to develop career-ready skills in the aerospace and advanced manufacturing industries. The program combines paid on-the-job training and college-level classroom instruction which can lead to a high school diploma, journey-level card, and short-term college certificate.
- **Spokane:** *Greater Spokane Incorporated/Spokane STEM Network* – Business After School helps students in the region gain STEM skills (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math), through skills-focused workshops hosted by area businesses for students, educators, parents, and community organizations.
- **Spokane:** *Spokane Area Workforce Development Council* – Next Generation Zone brings together education, career skills training, and community and employment resources in one place to provide wrap-around support to inspire young adults in their career goals.
- **Statewide:** Core Plus is a two-year standardized high school curriculum co-developed by the Boeing Company and recognized by the manufacturing industry throughout Washington state to prepare high school graduates for an entry-level career in manufacturing.
- **Statewide:** *Washington State Opportunity Scholarship (WSOS)* – Skills that Shine connects WSOS scholars with local one-to-one industry mentors that will coach scholars on resume writing, interviewing, networking, and professionalism.
- **Tacoma:** *City of Tacoma Neighborhood and Community Services Department* – Summer Jobs 253 is a paid internship program designed to provide incoming high school juniors and seniors with the opportunity to acquire life skills, work experience, and required high school credits they need for high school graduation.

- **Tacoma:** *Tacoma Public Schools* – Work Site Learning provides required high school credits and support for students in a variety of worksite learning and external paid internships, as well as internal paid internships through the Tacoma Public Schools CTE department.
- **Tri-Cities:** *Mid-Columbia STEM Network* – STEM Like Me! is a series of interactive personal encounters between STEM professionals and middle school students on the cusp of understanding who they can be in the future.
- **Vancouver:** *Southwest Washington STEM Network* – Instructional Worksite Learning Program for Advanced Manufacturing Careers involves highly-structured, time-limited learning experiences for 11th and 12th grade students interested in exploring careers in advanced manufacturing as well as developing their foundational technical skills, soft skills, and career readiness skills.
- **Wenatchee:** *Wenatchee School District* – Wenatchee Learns provides a system of career connected events, paid business internships, and career-related resources to expand opportunities for Wenatchee youth.
- **Yakima:** *South Central Workforce Development Council* – Youth Works: South Central Washington will work as a catalyst to strengthen existing partnerships and develop employer connections for youth in order to maximize the number of youths accessing mentors and work-based learning to increase graduation, job entry, and career success.

FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS OF SUCCESS

Four pillars of success emerged repeatedly through the Learning Lab project: leadership, relationships, relevance, and integration/cross sector collaboration. These driving themes show up throughout the practices articulated below as well as in the case studies. They implicitly underpin the Criteria of High Quality Career Connected Learning.

Leadership

High-level leadership and sustained support sets the culture and tone for transformative career connected learning experiences for young people. Depending on the scale of the project, this leadership includes school district superintendents, building principals, elected officials, CEOs of a local business, or executive directors of community based organizations. Clear and public leadership makes career connected learning a priority for an organization or community and creates the expectation for staff to work across traditional boundaries to problem solve and increase opportunities for youth.

Relationships

Overwhelming, the quality of personal relationships defined the impact of the experience for youth, providers, educators, and industry partners. Having the right person in the role proved time and again to be a key element of success. Genuine, trusting relationships develop when each party dedicates the time to understand perspectives and to jointly solve problems. While essential, reliance on relationships is also vulnerable to change. People leave, or programs scale beyond the capacity of individualized relationship management. The right balance of relationship management with systems development that



AEROSPACE JOINT APPRENTICESHIP
COMMITTEE (AJAC) - Youth Apprenticeship

can weather change is essential. This might include, for instance, knowledge management practices that document key processes, building templates so that each interaction is not reinventing the wheel, or forming relationships with multiple people in a given institution.

Relevance

Effective programs are relevant in two essential ways. First, in any program model, youth learning should be tied to real-world business experiences. How youth experience career connected learning needs to be connected to real jobs, current industry skills, and professionals working in that field. Second, youth need to relate to the career connected experience. Programs and experiences need to be culturally relevant and tie to their personal and career goals.

Integration or cross sector collaboration

The demands of quality career connected learning require working across sectors. Silos exist across and within systems, and high-quality programs have figured out ways to work across those boundaries. Workforce development, education, human services/nonprofit sector, and industry intersect to form a quality holistic experience. Departments in large institutions, including education, are stronger with interdepartmental collaboration. Each sector needs to understand and value the unique perspectives and resources that the others offer and develop cohesive strategies to leverage those assets.