



CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING & EXPANDED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

SKILLS GAPS IN WASHINGTON STATE:

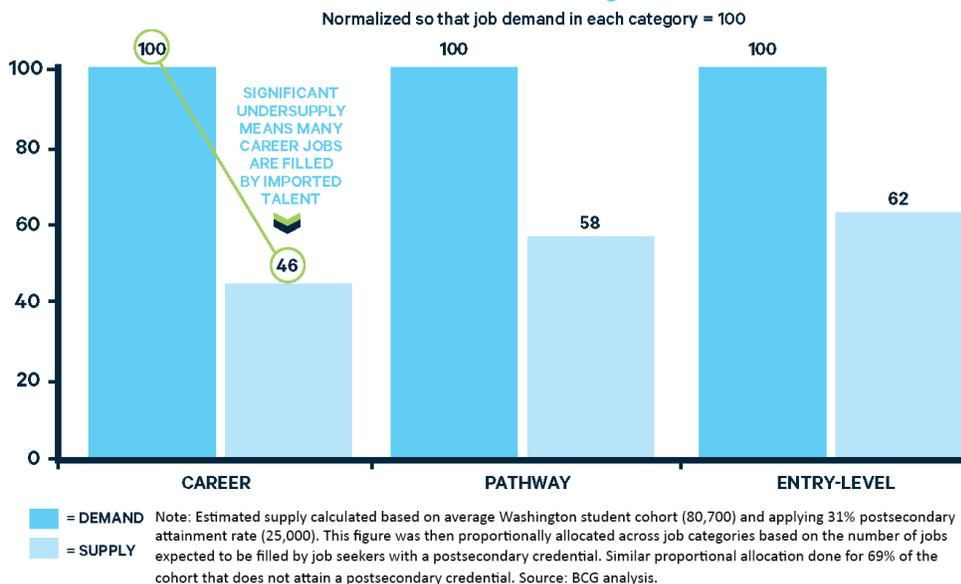
Previous BCG research, done in partnership with the Washington Roundtable, documented gaps between employer needs in our state and the skill levels of Washington job candidates. Our education system isn't producing enough qualified candidates for the jobs being created. Gaps are especially prevalent in the career jobs category, where the best wages and opportunities for upward mobility are found.

WHY CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING IS IMPORTANT?

In the next five years, Washington State is anticipating 740,000 job openings. However, data suggests that youth are not prepared with the skills (i.e. communication, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving, etc.) needed to fill most of these jobs.¹ In addition, the “Washington Kids 4 Washington Jobs” report states that less than a third of the high school students in our state go on to earn a post-secondary credential, a requirement of most current and upcoming job openings.

Providing high-quality career connected learning is key to equipping our youth with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill the needs of dynamic workforce, take advantage of various opportunities, and pursue a good quality life. The absence of these learning experiences will lead to jobs being filled by imported talent, while the students in Washington State will encounter limited opportunities in the future.¹

Annual Supply (Washington Students) vs. Demand (Washington Jobs)



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Expanded learning opportunities (ELOs), offered after school and in the summer, are a great mechanism to meet this challenge. ELOs work with youth from elementary through high school helping to deepen exposure to exciting content and develop essential ‘employability skills’, also known as 21st Century workforce skills such as communication, critical thinking, teamwork, problem solving, and perseverance.

Tapping into the potential of ELOs is a valuable way to enhance career connected learning and provide youth with different career options and pathways to get there. Especially for low-income students, where cost can be a barrier to access, providing low or no cost hands-on learning opportunities that apply career connected learning concepts to real life can be what helps develop the skills and passion for future success. ELO programs have the potential to raise awareness about different trades and jobs, create engaging projects related to specific career pathways, and partner with different industries on projects both on and off-site.

1. The “Washington Kids 4 Washington Jobs” report can be found here: http://www.waroundtable.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/WKWJ_FINAL_Report.pdf

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RECOMMENDATIONS TO REACH MORE YOUTH WITH CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING

Expanded learning opportunities provide young people with a space to pursue their passions and connect to career opportunities. Here are some examples of programs focused on promoting career connected learning.

WALLA WALLA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The 21st Century Community Learning Center program in Walla Walla Public Schools is designed to engage youth in career-connected experiences and leverage, in multiple ways, the knowledge and skills crucial to meet the workforce demand in Washington State. Through exposure to hands-on activities and effective program offerings (LEGO robotics, Weather Balloon Challenge, Game Maker, Code.org, etc.), youth are able to come up with innovative and creative ideas, work collaboratively with their peers and with local businesses, and problem solve efficiently. This program uses these offerings to spark student interests for with potential career and post-secondary pathways. (www.wwps.org/programs/21st-cclc)

CAPITOL REGION ESD 113

Capital Region ESD 113's 21st Century Community Learning Center program recognizes the value of life skill development and connecting learning to real-world experiences. The program focuses on providing opportunities for youth to become aware of and explore various career pathways and engage meaningfully in career connected learning opportunities. For example, the summer program includes a project where middle school youth develop a widget to solve a problem by developing a business plan (including a patent!), a communications approach, as well as a resume. They then pitch their idea to a team of adults that provide feedback on the widget, as well as presentation and interview skills. (www.esd113.org/Page/2391)

BUSINESS AFTERSCHOOL



Business AfterSchool is a program of Greater Spokane Incorporated, the Spokane region's next generation business development organization. Business AfterSchool is a noteworthy model that actively involves and connects the business community to youth by bringing them together in the same business space. This program offers on-site and hands-on workshops for youth to not only receive early exposure to various workplace settings, but expand their knowledge about various job fields including engineering, health care, computer science, manufacturing, and more. Through this direct approach, youth are able to dig deeper into the options available within broad career fields and learn about the technical skills required for jobs now and in the future. (BusinessAfterSchool.com)

RECOMMENDATIONS



Increase Public Support for Career Connected Learning

Increasing funding and state and local partnership opportunities between business and workforce stakeholders and ELOs.



Get Involved

Explore opportunities for businesses and their employees to volunteer with an ELO provider whether working on a specific project, discussing career and education pathways, or mentoring students.



Contribute Resources and Time

Provide monetary or in-kind resources, join the board of an organization, be a spokesperson for the value of ELOs, and/or take part in advocacy efforts with policymakers to support these programs and make a greater impact.

OUR MISSION: School's Out Washington provides services and guidance for organizations to ensure all young people have safe places to learn and grow when not in school. SOWA is dedicated to building community systems to support quality afterschool, youth development and summer programs for Washington's children and youth ages 5 through young adulthood.

LEARN MORE: www.schoolsoutwashington.org/pages/career-connected-learning