



Education & Training

Problem:

Washington State's competitiveness rests on the cornerstone of a well-educated and technically competent workforce. It is imperative that Washington's children receive a quality standards-based education so they can obtain the knowledge and skills they need for whichever pathway they choose after high school – entry into the job market, postsecondary education, or starting their own business. The workforce development and training system is very complex and access to workforce development programs for small business is difficult. Additional improvements are necessary in all levels of the educational system and in workforce training programs to ensure Washington maintains its edge in an ever-globally competitive environment.

Background:

The 1993 Education Reform Act (HB 1209) recognized all students – not just the traditional college bound student - needed to master fundamentals in core subjects like reading, writing, mathematics and science in order to succeed beyond high school. Congress passed into law the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 (PL 105-220) to prepare youth, dislocated workers, and adults for entry into the workforce, and to provide for the planning, implementation, and ongoing oversight of a comprehensive state workforce development system. The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB) was created by the Legislature in 1991 to make the state's workforce education and training system better coordinated, more efficient, more responsive to the needs of business, workers and local communities, and more accountable for its performance.

Solution:

1. Maintain and improve on a high quality standards-based education.
 - Support quality K-12 education through standards-based curriculum, assessments and the Certificate of Academic Achievement. Support the State Board of Education's plan to align graduation course requirements to reflect real-world expectations.
 - Improve K-12 and higher education alignment. Establish system to measure performance and focus resources. Significantly reduce the number of high school graduates that need remediation in reading, writing or math before beginning post-secondary education or vocation-specific training.
 - Ensure a commitment to improving mathematics and science education and achievement through increased rigor in course instruction, and accelerating recruitment, training and compensation strategies to address the shortage of qualified math and science teachers.
 - Ensure that students have meaningful opportunities to learn by requiring K-12 system accountability and granting state education agencies authority to intervene in the persistently lowest performing schools.
 - Promote the delivery of individual instruction of state standards through use of electronic media and other innovative practices
 - Ensure school funding is tied to student achievement of established standards and school accountability, and provides schools with the flexibility they need to deliver high-quality, focused instruction.
 - Encourage career counseling and guidance programs that enhance student retention and adequately prepare graduates for post-secondary opportunities.
 - Take steps to ensure Washington is among the top ten states with the highest graduation rates.
2. Encourage policies that support additional enrollment of Washington students, at both state and independent institutions, in high demand programs that are critical to the state's economic growth.
 - Maintain and improve General-fund State funding for high demand job skills, incumbent worker training and transferable skill sets programs and funding for higher education, and advance investments in research at the state's research universities. Eliminate those programs that are not successful or relevant.
3. Fill the needs of the workforce at all levels of skills.
 - Support the enhancement of Career Technical Education (CTE) programs in high schools to ensure alignment with economic development trends and higher education opportunities.
 - Support apprenticeship programs, skills centers, vocational programs, partnerships with educational institutions, and other innovative ways to provide more opportunities for students and increase the supply of skilled craft workers. Review existing programs to ensure they meet the needs of the workplace.
 - Authorize employer tax incentives for the employment of students in workforce training programs for high demand job skills such as math, science and health science.
 - Establish central clearinghouse for available workforce pool with coordinated outreach to employers. This should include private plant closures, lay-offs and public efforts with military Transition Centers.

For questions on education, please contact AWB's Donna Steward at donnas@awb.org and for workforce training contact Amber Carter at 1-800-521-9325 or amberc@awb.org.