

# 2021 HB 15-1170 PWR Coordinator Update

This report provides a status update on the progress made by the PWR Coordinator, a staff person established under [HB 15-1170](#) and shared between the Colorado Workforce Development Council (CWDC) and the Colorado Department of Education (CDE). For implementation purposes, the PWR coordinator is referred to as the Education Consultant throughout this document.

In order to support schools to improve postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR) outcomes for students, the PWR Coordinator has been focusing on increasing understanding by K-12 systems of industry and community demand. These efforts include strengthening education and business partnerships and alignment and increasing flexibility in K-12 systems. By increasing flexibility in curriculum and experience delivery methods, schools are responsive to industry need and demand therefore supporting skill development of the talent pipeline. By aligning programs and pathways to industry demand, schools ensure that students are able to access meaningful career opportunities and that businesses have access to a skilled workforce, strengthening community economies and talent pipelines.

The Education Consultant is intentional about supporting the work around the Colorado Department of Education's strategic plan. Much of this work focuses on the "More Options" goals for students, providing additional opportunities for students to acquire and demonstrate postsecondary and workforce readiness (PWR).

## 2020 - 2021 Accomplishments

In order to support schools to build connections with industry partners and to enhance high-quality, in-demand pathways for students, the Education Consultant engaged in many different activities. These activities are highlighted below.

### Increasing Flexibility in Education Systems to Strengthen PWR Programs

#### Virtual Work-based Learning Adoption

This year required districts to pivot their established work-based learning very quickly, and many innovations emerged around virtual work-based learning. Some of these innovations included virtual project-based internships and recorded industry interviews that students were able to access asynchronously. The big takeaway from these virtual experiences is that students are able to access employers outside of their region, and employers are able to engage with students in authentic ways without facing the same capacity limitations. To support these pivots,

the Education Consultant highlighted resources and frameworks throughout the WBL Incubator (explained below) that focused on virtual internships, industry-sponsored projects, and job shadowing. Moving forward the Education Consultant will continue to support districts and businesses in building the infrastructure for virtual work-based learning experiences.

### **Career Development Incentive Program**

While the Career Development Incentive Program saw a decline in reported credentials for the 2020-2021 school year due to programs that required a hands-on training component that could not be accessed due to COVID-19, the program saw innovations with how credential programs and training were accessed virtually, especially in areas that did not previously have instructors or materials. The Education Consultant reviewed the approved credentials list and added a field for whether or not credentials were available virtually in order to support access. To support increased adoption of these in-demand credentials the Education Consultant continued to speak with districts and support implementation.

### **CDE Strategic Goal Alignment**

Expand work-based learning opportunities, with an emphasis on virtual experiences in light of COVID-19, to help students prepare for living-wage, in-demand jobs, while expanding access to certificates and credentials. (More Options)

## **Strengthening Business & Education Partnerships and Alignment**

### **Behavioral Health High School Pathway Program Resource**

In partnership with Colorado Career and Technical Education, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMHSA), and others the "[Preparing Students for Behavioral Health Careers](#)" resource was created. This resource is an extension of the pathways presented on My Colorado Journey and was created to support the development of behavioral health career pathway programs in secondary schools to support the labor market shortage of behavioral health professionals. Currently, this resource is the catalyst for work with the Office of Behavioral Health to create secondary and youth career pathway programs.

### **Essential Skills Revision**

This year the Colorado Department of Education reviewed the Colorado Essential Skills and the Education Consultant supported that work by including relevant industry data and demand around essential skills to add those that were previously missing. The Education Consultant also ensured that digital skills were well represented. The next step in this process, supported by the Education Consultant, is an implementation guide that will include support around building essential skills in career connected and work-based learning environments.

## CDE Strategic Goal Alignment

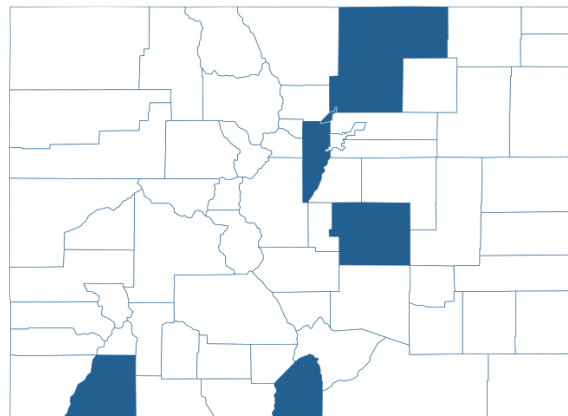
Assist educators in building effective partnerships with business, based on existing capacity.  
(More Options)

## Training and Technical Assistance

### Work-based Learning Incubator

The Work-based Learning Incubator wrapped up in June of 2021. The goal of the three strands of the Incubator (webinar series, Work-based Learning Community of Practice, and Work-based Learning Incubator Convening) was to support the development of high-quality work-based learning programs and to help schools and districts connect with each other around best practices in a changing economy.

- The monthly webinar series had a wide range of topics, such as Engaging with Business, Equitable Practices, and Program Assessment. There was also an included focus on the [WBL Continuum](#). Each webinar had over 100 registrants from across the state. Feedback results from the WBL Incubator webinar series include:
  - 99% of survey respondents reported being able to utilize information from these sessions in their work
  - Average rating of 4.46/5 for session effectiveness
  - Attendees reported feeling more connected after the webinars, including connected to their peers and also more connected to the ecosystem around them that would help them build stronger programs and support their communities and businesses
  - Attendees also reported being able to utilize learning immediately in program development and feeling supported by the series to be able to pivot in the COVID-19 year.
- The WBL Community of Practice Launched in January and ran through May with six participating schools and districts: Weld Re-3J, Jefferson County Public Schools, Centennial R-1, The Academy of Charter Schools, The Business Education Connection of Durango Public Schools, and Falcon School District D49.



- These six schools and districts came together for a work day each month and followed the human-centered design method to build stronger career connected learning experiences for their students. Results included:
  - Teams valued the collaboration time and the ability to connect with others across the state around promising practices and human-centered design.
  - Districts cited at the end how they were able to connect with labor market data to inform their programs, survey students effectively to understand programming gaps, and build the infrastructure for sustainable programs. 2 districts hired coordinators for the 2021-2022 school year to continue this work.
  - Below are case studies from three of the participating communities:
    - [The Academy of Charter Schools](#)
    - [Centennial School District R-1](#)
    - [Weld County School District RE-3J](#)
- WBL Incubator Convening
  - The culminating event of the Work-based Learning Incubator was a virtual convening held in June of 2021. More than 250 people registered for the convening and reported that they were able to connect to others around the state doing similar work, and that they left the convening with multiple takeaways and resources to help strengthen their career connected learning programs and work with industry. Please find the session recordings [here](#).

## CDE Strategic Goal Alignment

Bring innovative practices to scale (such as programs where students gain workforce credentials and college credit while in high school) for the benefit of more students statewide through professional development and consultations.

## Goals for 2022

- Amplify understanding of work-based learning and incentivize participation for businesses through 2022 Work-based Learning Incubator Community of Practice, webinars, and individual coaching sessions.
- Utilizing the career pathway development from this year and information in My Colorado Journey regarding the energy industry, the Education Consultant will work collaboratively with industry partners, the Colorado CTE team, and K-12 programs to develop a resource for secondary schools around a high school to postsecondary energy pathway. This resource will focus on development of energy-related programming that aligns to industry demand. Further, this resource will provide examples of work-based learning experiences, concurrent enrollment opportunities, certifications that lead to

high-demand, high-wage jobs, and aligned CTE (Career and Technical Education) courses.

- Utilize PWR programming and Talent Equity Agenda strategies in order to support closing COVID-exacerbated opportunity gaps in career connected learning experiences.
- Increase K-12 awareness of and engagement with the Career Development Incentive Program to increase credential attainment for students of color and from low income backgrounds.