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From Connector to Catalyst

THE CHAMBERS ROLE IN CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING

THE URGENCY IS REAL: WHAT THE NUMBERS TELL US

64% OF EMPLOYERS IN WASHINGTON REPORT DIFFICULTY FINDING QUALIFIED CANDIDATES FOR OPEN POSITIONS (AWB INSTITUTE, 2024).

1 IN 4 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES IN WASHINGTON DON'T ENROLL IN ANY FORM OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION OR TRAINING WITHIN A YEAR OF GRADUATION (WSAC, 2023).

BUSINESSES THAT ENGAGE STUDENTS EARLY THROUGH WORK-BASED LEARNING SEE 20–30% HIGHER RETENTION RATES AMONG NEW HIRES (NATIONAL SKILLS COALITION, 2023).

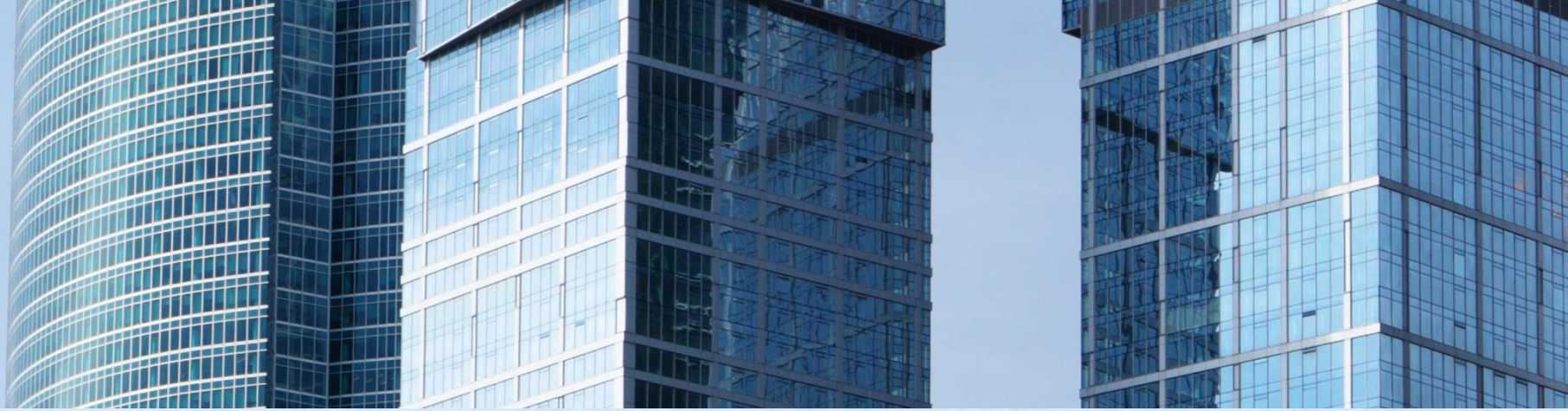
\$3,000–\$5,000 IS THE AVERAGE COST TO ONBOARD AND TRAIN A NEW EMPLOYEE—COSTS THAT DROP SIGNIFICANTLY WHEN CANDIDATES HAVE PRIOR WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE.

Look around your community—every future leader, innovator, and skilled worker is sitting in a classroom right now. The question is: will they be ready for you when you need them?



TODAY'S DISCUSSION

- WHAT CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING MEANS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- ROI FOR EMPLOYERS WHO ENGAGE IN CCL
- THE E5 FRAMEWORK: EXPOSURE, EXPLORATION, EDUCATION, EXPERIENCE, EMPLOYMENT
- WHY ONBOARDING MATTERS FOR K-12, HIGHER ED, AND INDUSTRY
- THE CHAMBER'S OPPORTUNITY TO MOVE FROM CONNECTOR TO CATALYST
- HOW WHY3WORKS SUPPORTS REGIONAL SYSTEMS CHANGE
- PRACTICAL NEXT STEPS FOR CHAMBERS



WHY CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION IS HARD

K-12

Goals: Graduation, pathways, equity
Barriers: Staff capacity, compliance load

HIGHER ED

Goals: Enrollment, credentials, ROI
Barriers: Siloed programs, unclear demand

INDUSTRY

Goals: Skilled, job-ready talent
Barriers: Time, unclear school processes

Chambers are uniquely positioned to speak all three "languages" and translate vision into action.



CAREER CONNECTED LEARNING = ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

NOT JUST ABOUT COLLEGE READINESS—THIS IS WORKFORCE READINESS.

EARLY EXPOSURE + REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCES = BETTER FIT, HIGHER RETENTION

HELPS LOCAL EMPLOYERS SOLVE THEIR BIGGEST PROBLEM: TALENT.

Career Connected Learning is not an extracurricular activity—it's the infrastructure for a resilient workforce and thriving communities."

ROI FOR EMPLOYERS (WHY IT PAYS OFF)

- Reduced training & onboarding costs
 - Increased retention rates
 - Stronger community brand & culture
 - Earlier access to emerging talent
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- Companies with established internship/apprenticeship pipelines experience up to 50% faster hiring times for critical roles (SHRM, 2023).
 - Work-based learning alumni are 42% more likely to stay with their first employer for at least two years (National Skills Coalition, 2023).



INTRODUCING THE E5 FRAMEWORK

THIS IS HOW WE MOVE FROM DISCONNECTED ACTIVITIES TO A CONTINUUM OF PREPARATION.

- Exposure to industries as early as elementary school
- Exploration through middle and high school via career fairs, tours, panels
- Education aligned to high-demand sectors and dual credit opportunities
- Experience through internships, job shadows, and project-based learning
- Employment with real credentials and pathways into the workforce

The E5 Framework brings clarity, consistency, and equity to CCL across systems.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ONBOARDING

Intentional onboarding is critical for all three sectors:

K–12

Teachers and counselors need training and tools to implement career-connected instruction and advising with fidelity.

HIGHER ED

Faculty and pathway designers must understand workforce needs and employer input, and know how to embed them into academic structures.

INDUSTRY

Supervisors and HR teams must be equipped to host, mentor, and support students in meaningful, safe, and compliant ways.

A comprehensive onboarding plan aligned to the E5 Framework ensures all partners are ready—at each phase of the continuum.



IF YOU COMMIT, WE ALL WIN

If We Commit, Here's What Happens For **Students & Families**:

- Students graduate with clear goals, relevant skills, and recognized credentials.
- Families understand and support pathways that lead to sustainable careers.

For **Educational Leadership & Educators**:

- School leaders see measurable gains in graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment, and career readiness.

For **Community & Industry**:

- Employers gain reliable, locally-grown talent pipelines.
- Communities benefit from stronger economies, reduced youth unemployment, and a more engaged workforce.

WHY3WORKS EDUCATION/WORKFORCE CONSULTANTS

Why3Works exists to connect purpose, pathways, and partnerships so education, industry, and communities can build sustainable career opportunities that truly work.

The Meaning Behind “Why3Works”

At its core, Why3Works is about always starting with why—the purpose that drives change—and building the systems to make that change last.



WHY3WORKS

EDUCATION/WORKFORCE CONSULTANTS

EMPOWERING SYSTEMS, ELEVATING FUTURES



THANK YOU



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