

## U.S. Department of Education launches new initiative to support career-connected learning

Written by Staff Reports

Thursday, 24 November 2022 23:10

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WASHINGTON D.C. – The U.S. Department of Education announced the launch of “Raise the Bar: Unlocking Career Success,” a new Biden-Harris Administration initiative supported by the Departments of Commerce and Labor to increase and expand access to high-quality training programs to help young Americans pursue jobs in today’s in-demand fields, and be prepared for careers of the future, on Nov. 14.

This new effort unites key agencies of the Biden-Harris Administration to strengthen the connection between K-12 education, postsecondary education, and workforce programs. With the support of the \$120 billion dollars dedicated to K-12 education in the American Rescue Plan and Perkins funding, the Administration is ensuring the next generation is building the skills necessary to fill high-paying jobs like those created by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and CHIPS and Science Act. This includes expanding access to skills-based learning and training pathways, like Registered Apprenticeships in key industries such as advanced manufacturing, automotive, and cybersecurity.

As part of the launch, the Department is announcing \$5.6 million dollars in Perkins funding for a new program to expand work-based learning opportunities for students and will issue new guidance on how federal funds can be used to develop and expand career pathway programs, including Registered Apprenticeships. As part of this new initiative, the Department will host regional summits with students, educators, employers, and other stakeholders to learn about practices that have led to success and challenges that must be addressed.

“It’s time we bridge the divide between our K-12 systems and our college, career, and industry

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preparation programs, which leave too many students behind and perpetuate inequities in our most diverse, underserved, and rural communities,” U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona said. “An education system reimagined for the 21st century engages youth of all ages in the power of career-connected learning and provides every student with the opportunity to gain real-life work experience, earn college credits, and make progress towards an industry credential before they graduate high school.”

Cardona praised the Biden-Harris administration for the work they’re doing in education.

“Today, the Biden-Harris team is raising the bar with new investments and resources to support intentional collaboration between schools, colleges, workforce development agencies and industry partners and building clearer pathways for students to rewarding careers and lifelong success,” Cardona said.

In support of the launch, the First Lady Jill Biden, Cardona, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo, and U.S. Secretary of Labor Marty Walsh will travel to northwest suburban Chicago to meet with students enrolled in a career-connected learning program at Rolling Meadows High School. The Secretaries and the First Lady will also visit Aon’s Chicago facility hosted by the Chicago Apprenticeship Network to highlight the value of Registered Apprenticeship, particularly in non-traditional industries and corporate careers with a focus on underrepresented populations and communities in key sectors of technology, finance, insurance, and banking. The visits coincide with the first day of National Apprenticeship Week, marking the 85th Anniversary of the National Apprenticeship Act.

“America is home to some of the world’s brightest and most ambitious students, and we owe it to them to set them up for success,” Raimondo said. “Career-connected education programs are essential to the success of the American economy and will spur a new generation of researchers, engineers, and manufacturers in critical industries. In launching this initiative, these programs and their graduates will enable us to continue outcompeting and out-innovating the rest of the world.”

The “Raise the Bar” initiative includes:

**Investing \$5.6 million in Perkins funding for schools to expand work-based learning**

### **opportunities**

The Education Department announced that it will launch the “Career Z Challenge: Expanding Work-Based Learning Opportunities” competition in Spring 2023. The competition will foster multi-sector partnerships and expand work-based learning opportunities for students. Semi-finalists and finalists will be eligible to receive targeted technical assistance including professional development support, webinars and training, as well as a portion of a prize pool.

### **Providing new guidance to schools on using American Rescue Plan funds to expand career pathways for students to pursue in-demand jobs and support Registered Apprenticeships**

The Department will publish a “Dear Colleague Letter” that provides information on how schools can use ARPA funds to develop and expand career pathway programs and help more students pursue careers in in-demand fields.

This initiative builds on Biden’s FY 2023 Budget proposal, which invests \$200 million in Career-Connected high schools and supports competitive grants to grow and build models of this bold vision. Funding would also support partnerships between local educational agencies, institutions of higher education—including community colleges—and employers, to encourage earning college credit while in high school through dual enrollment in core content and career and technical coursework; work-based learning opportunities; and academic and career counseling.

Biden’s FY 2023 Budget proposal also includes \$1.4 billion for Career and Technical Education programs. This includes an increase of \$20 million for CTE state grants that would expand access to career-connected programs for more students.

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