

Building career assets for lifelong success

Landscape of opportunities that connect D.C.'s high school-age youth to college and work-based learning



D.C. POLICY CENTER
Education Policy Initiative

This report provides a high-level landscape to help better understand which career asset building opportunities are available to high school-aged youth as a starting point to understanding quality, equity, and gaps in offerings. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of these opportunities can help better prepare D.C.'s alumni for their early careers.

Read the complete report at dcpolicycenter.org.

Current state of early career outcomes for D.C. alumni

D.C.'s public high school alumni underperform in the labor market.



Data reveal the unemployment rate for young D.C. natives is **23%**, 20 percentage points higher than similarly aged residents who were not born in D.C.



D.C. born young adults (ages 18-34) earn an average of \$34,000 annually—\$37,000 less than those who move into the city.

D.C. high school students are not ready for college or careers.



Only **20%** of 12th graders meet or exceed the SAT College and Career Ready Benchmark.



Just **53%** of high school graduates enroll in postsecondary education within 6 months of graduation.



34% of high school students meet or exceed expectations on the English Language Arts (ELA) CAPE statewide assessment and 11.6% do so in math.

Students who gain career assets in high school improve their early career outcomes.



Career assets are the tools, skills, experiences, and competencies that help D.C. youth effectively navigate post-high school life, including college and careers.



A recent survey found that career assets can enhance earnings for D.C.'s alumni, including those who pursue college and those who go directly into a career.

This report takes stock of opportunities available to D.C.'s high school students to build career assets. These include:



Connections to college: Programs, courses, and experiences that help students improve their postsecondary degree outcomes.



Connections to work-based learning: Initiatives that give youth the opportunity to practice career-ready competencies in a real-world setting.

Key findings

Providers:

Provider breakdown: Across 49 opportunities, government-provided opportunities, including those hosted by schools, accounted for **90%** of participation; **6%** of participation was reported by LEAs; and **4%** was at nonprofits.

Measurement gaps: Current outcome tracking primarily relies on participant surveys, and providers are interested in other methods of measuring success.

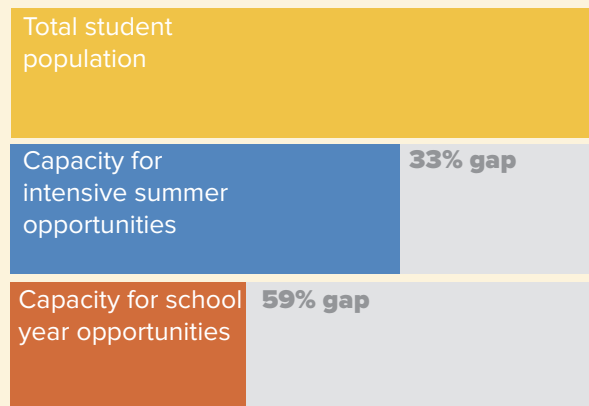
Survey responses:

To inform this report, the D.C. Policy Center gathered information about 49 career asset building opportunities in D.C., or the programs, courses, or experiences that help youth build career assets.

Access gaps:

Capacity: Intensive summer opportunities can only serve **67%** of high school students, and capacity during the school year can serve **41%**.

Barriers: Important barriers exist to student participation in career asset building opportunities, including lack of awareness, time in schedule, and a successful academic record.



Programs:

Program Intensity

Most opportunities are offered more than twice a week, indicating a focus on intensive engagement.

Program Focus

Fewer opportunities are geared towards career launch, access to college during high school, or matriculation in college.

Common Goal

Most opportunities include postsecondary planning—an important intermediate step toward a successful early career.

Recommendations for Action

➔ **Build a comprehensive system:** Establish a clear, integrated network of career asset building opportunities, with tools to help youth navigate offerings and connect them to postsecondary pathways.

➔ **Conduct further research:** Investigate which skills are gained, which approaches are most effective for quality and equity, how opportunities keep students engaged in school, and what strategies are working to engage employers.

➔ **Track outcomes for better design:** Enhance long-term outcome measurement and participating tracking to inform and refine program design.

➔ **Expand access:** Address barriers to participation including a review of high school graduation requirements.

This report was made possible with generous support from The Richard E. and Nancy P. Marriott Foundation and Education Forward DC.