

Career Launch Philosophy

Career Launch has been established under the leadership of Governor Dennis Daugaard to increase student awareness about career opportunities in their communities and help meet South Dakota's demand for a skilled workforce.

We are encouraging high schools to expand the availability of work-based education experiences, such as apprenticeships, internships, or job shadowing during school. The best way for young people to learn about careers and find fields they like – or don't like – is to experience them. In addition, these work experiences help our young people learn how to arrive on-time, how to dress appropriately for the job, how to interact with co-workers and customers.

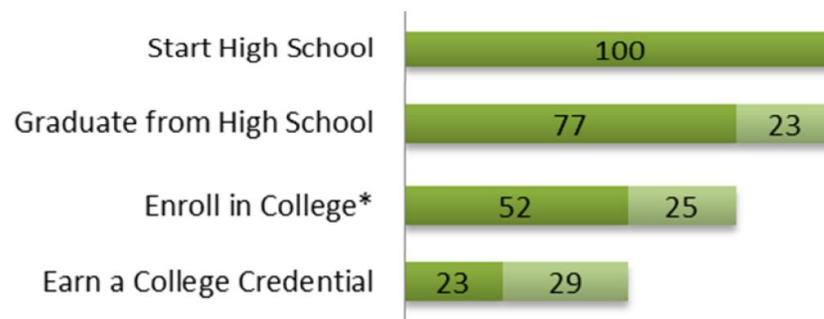
-Governor Dennis Daugaard

Career Launch Background

There are two inter-related workforce problems in South Dakota. From the perspective of businesses and employers, our state does not have enough workers in many skilled fields, and this is a barrier to economic growth. We have companies that do not expand, or that turn away business, because they cannot hire enough skilled workers to do the work. Almost any business owner will identify workforce as a significant concern.

But we must also see this from the perspective of our young people. We want them to receive an education that allows them to find well-paying, fulfilling jobs, here in South Dakota. We have an excellent education system in our state, but we must help all of our young people achieve this goal.

South Dakota's Education System: Many students don't have a straight path to careers



* Estimate based on historical data

The above chart depicts a sample of 100 South Dakota public school students who entered high school in 2006. As may be seen, 77 graduated, with only 52 graduates entering a post-secondary school. Only 23 completed.

Additionally, high school student engagement and youth participation in the workforce has declined dramatically over the past two decades. This reduced opportunities for students to gain exposure to a variety of occupations and develop foundational employment skills. This lack of work experience can lead students to make costly decisions about their futures lacking sufficient real-world context. Without this context, young adults may learn too late that their chosen pathway either is not a good fit or they still lack the skills employers need.

Career Launch Basics

We must ensure students are graduating high school with a clear understanding of opportunities available within our job market, the paths available to achieve their goals, and the pros and cons of the routes they may choose.

In addition, we must engage parents and educators in the conversation about the multiple pathways to success. All the while, we must stress the importance of businesses investing in our youth by offering a range of work-based learning opportunities – such as job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships.

Career Launch will provide middle school students with career exploration and high school students with opportunities to gain a workplace experience that complements their studies. The Department of Labor (DLR) and the Department of Education (DOE) are partnering with four school districts: Brookings, Yankton, Rapid City, and Sioux Falls. The pilot project intends to develop a model to be expanded statewide. The needs of every community are unique. The pilot is tailored to meet community needs while still meeting overall program goals.

In the pilot communities, DLR staff will work directly with the school districts to provide career advising services and act as business liaisons. As business liaisons, they will simplify for both schools and businesses the process of establishing work-based learning opportunities. Engaging trained community volunteers, maximizing the potential impact of classroom teachers on students' decisions about their futures, and working with established programs like Junior Achievement will facilitate the expansion of Career Launch to communities large and small in the future.

