

An aerial photograph of a school bus parking lot, showing several yellow school buses parked in rows. The image is overlaid with a teal color. The text "EMPLOYERS + WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARIES" is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

EMPLOYERS + WORKFORCE INTERMEDIARIES

Career-Connected Learning

Investing in Detroit's Future Talent

As the future of work changes rapidly, it is reshaping the skills that young people need in order to meaningfully participate in the labor market and improve their long-term economic outcomes. In Detroit, there are many efforts currently underway—in schools and through youth organizations, employers, and other partners—with the goal of building the capacity of young people and preparing them for life after high school.

But while there is meaningful progress being made, young people still need early exposure, clear pathways into a wide range of industries, and consistent support to navigate their academic and early career journeys. Career-connected learning is central to bridging the gap between education and the workforce and ensuring that young people have real choices when it comes to their career pathways.

“Career-Connected Learning: Investing in Detroit’s Future Talent” examines how Detroit’s education, youth development, and workforce systems are aligned to connect young people to opportunity. By centering youth voice, the report explores bright spots, barriers, and opportunities across three core components of career-connected learning: career awareness and exploration, career guidance, and work-based learning.



WHY YOUR ROLE MATTERS

Young people are the workforce of tomorrow.

Employers are valuable role models for young people.

A strong talent pipeline is beneficial to the economic development of the city.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

- 1 Not all career awareness and exploration activities are resonating with young people's actual interests.
- 2 Many young people are unfamiliar with high-opportunity and high-wage occupations in the region but have an interest in learning more about the regional labor market.
- 3 Youth seek more one-on-one career guidance from educators and mentors, and access to supports.
- 4 Young people's career priorities and job expectations are subtly shifting due to rising college costs, delayed access to high-paying roles, and rapid advances in technology, automation, and AI.
- 5 Passion for the field is a major source of excitement for potential careers, as well as purpose and income.
- 6 Young people increasingly desire more hands-on learning and earn-and-learn experiences.
- 7 Young people face gaps in accessing state-approved and industry-recognized credentials.
- 8 Young people want more exposure, training, and access to build their technical, durable, and life skills.
- 9 Stronger data infrastructure is needed to link students' education and workforce outcomes.

WHERE YOU CAN START

1. Drive career awareness through career talks and employer site visits and job shadow experiences.
2. Connect with youth to offer information and guidance on career pathways.
3. Collaborate with educational institutions to design academic programs.
4. Define the technical and durable skills needed in the workplace.
5. Develop and scale internships, apprenticeships, and skills-training programs.
6. Offer accessible credentials and certifications to validate students' skills.
7. Convene different stakeholders in the ecosystem under a shared vision and strategy for action.
8. Establish data reporting standards for different work-based learning programs.
9. Invest in data and evaluation systems to measure program effectiveness.
10. Remain flexible and forgiving as young people learn to navigate adult responsibilities and contexts.