

IMPACTING STATES' PLANS TO EXPAND EARLY CAREER EXPLORATION

BACKGROUND

The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V), signed into law in July 2018 as the reauthorization of the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, paves the way for much needed investment in career exploration at a younger age for students across the country. For the first time, this legislation now permits Perkins funding to be used on career exploration programming as early as fifth grade. Research shows that middle school is an ideal time to expose students to activities designed to help them explore their natural skills and talents, experiment in potential occupations, and start a plan that can evolve over time to reach their ultimate career goals; read more in ASA's policy brief, "[Expanding career exploration to middle schools state-by-state with Perkins V.](#)"

But while Perkins V sets the stage at the federal level, it is up to individual states to prioritize earlier career exploration as part of their state plans for career and technical education; review and revise state regulations and definitions that may restrict this expansion to younger grades; and ensure proper support structures are in place to carry it out successfully.

STATE-BY-STATE OUTREACH

In 2019, as states began preparing their federally required State Perkins V Plans for the next five years, American Student Assistance conducted an outreach campaign to all 50 U.S. state career and technical education directors, urging them to take advantage of Perkins funding to expand their career exploration programming and funding to students as early as middle school. After the initial round of outreach, we conducted an analysis of all draft State Perkins V Plans. Our research indicates that **more than half** of all states plan to make the expansion of early career exploration and self-discovery a significant priority (see map on reverses). Additionally, four states specifically mentioned ASA's outreach in their draft plans or provided feedback directly.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Despite the positive progress made, however, we know there is still work to be done. ASA will continue to advocate for policies that pave the way for high-quality career exploration and self-discovery opportunities as early as middle school; work with state or local governments and school districts directly to expand access to these types of opportunities; and provide resources to help educators, parents and mentors deliver these activities to students.

STATE FEEDBACK EXAMPLE ARKANSAS:

"Thank you for your letter in support of career exploration at the 5th and 6th grade levels, now possible under Perkins V. We appreciate your leadership to share the voice of American Student Assistance and are pleased to share that the Arkansas State Perkins V Draft plan includes career exploration at the 5th and 6th grade levels. As you note, the lower grades will help to provide a foundation for a seamless continuum in grades 5-12."



