

The Idaho Middle School Career Technical Education (CTE) Initiative

First Steps: Understanding the World of Work through CTE

In 2018, the Idaho Legislature expanded career technical education (CTE) to 7th and 8th grade. In response, the Idaho Division of Career Technical Education (IDCTE) launched an initiative, First Steps: Understanding the World of Work through Career Technical Education, to research best practices, develop a CTE-focused career development program for students at the middle level, and pilot it.

During the 2019-2020 school year, IDCTE entered the development phase and joined with teams of educators from eleven middle schools across the state to build standards, provide endorsement and assessment recommendations, and create teacher resources. The group became known as the First Steps Pilot Group and included: Aberdeen Middle School (Aberdeen), Fernwaters Public Charter School (Salmon), Fremont Middle School (Kuna), Grangeville Middle School (Grangeville), Jenifer Middle School (Lewiston), Jerome Middle School (Jerome), Lake Hazel Middle School (West Ada School District), Raft River Junior High School (Malta), Rigby Middle School (Rigby), Rimrock Junior High School (Bruneau), and Weiser Junior High School (Weiser).

During the 2020-2021 school year, nine of the eleven schools piloted the standards in course offerings for their students.

First Steps Standards

Domain 1: Self-Evaluation (Who am I?)

1. Identify Personality (What makes me unique?)
 - A. Take a personality inventory.
 - B. Document a reflection of the results.

2. Identify Interests (What do I enjoy doing?)
 - A. Use multiple methods to identify personal interests.
 - B. Document a reflection of the results.

3. Identify Values (What really matters to me?)
 - A. Summarize personal importance of family and other relationships as they relate to school/work.
 - B. Assess desired lifestyle and associated cost.
 - C. Relate the importance of health and wellness to school/work.
 - D. Document a reflection of the results.

4. Identify Skills (What am I good at?)
 - A. *Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving
 - i. Recognize and analyze a problem.
 - ii. Identify and evaluate potential solutions and resources.
 - iii. Use sound reasoning to choose a solution.
 - iv. Implement the solution and evaluate the outcome.
 - v. Document a reflection about your use of the problem-solving process.

 - B. *Work Ethic
 - i. Define work ethic and explain its importance in the workplace.
 - ii. Define and explain the importance of diligence, dependability, responsibility, and accountability in the workplace.
 - iii. Demonstrate diligence.
 - iv. Demonstrate dependability.
 - v. Demonstrate responsibility.
 - vi. Demonstrate accountability.
 - vii. Document a reflection about personal work ethic after demonstrating diligence, dependability, responsibility, and accountability.

 - C. *Information Security
 - i. Evaluate presence on social media.
 - ii. Evaluate risk associated with presence on social media.
 - iii. Follow classroom/workplace protocols to maintain the security of information, computers, networks, and facilities.
 - iv. Demonstrate basic internet and email safety.
 - v. Document a reflection about personal presence on social media, associated risks, and changes needed for personal safety.

Domain 2: Career Exploration (What's out there for me?)

1. Apply Self-Evaluation to the World of Work (Where do I fit in the world of work?)
 - A. Express the purpose and value of work.
 - B. Summarize how one researches and chooses a career interest.
 - C. Use results of self-evaluation to identify related career clusters and occupations.
 - D. Explore multiple career clusters and occupations of interest (e.g. work site visits, speakers, case studies, shadowing, or community service).
 - E. Choose a cluster or occupation. Research the education or training required, including program of study, labor market information, and wage compared to Idaho's living wage.

2. Make Responsible Choices (How do my choices influence my future?)
 - A. Describe how personal, career, and educational choices impact major life decisions.
 - B. Describe how your personal choices will affect workplace, school, and community.
 - C. Discuss the need for continuous career planning.

Domain 3: Future Planning (How do I get there?)

1. *Efficiency and Productivity (How do I turn an interest in to a plan?)
 - A. Having identified a career interest and program of study, research institutions offering the program according to personal preferences.
 - B. Research helpful high school courses and experiences.
 - C. Utilize a goal setting process to develop short-term and long-term personal, education, and career goals.
 - D. Manage time and resources and track progress throughout the term.
2. Understand High School Offerings (What can I do in high school to reach my goals?)
 - A. Explore available CTE programs.
 - B. Research the local CTSO options and benefits for participation therein.
 - C. Examine the benefits of participating in school and community activities.
 - D. Examine academic and other high school pathways.
3. Create and Idaho Student Learning Plan (How do I move forward?)
 - A. Develop or update the Idaho Student Learning Plan (Four-Year Plan) aligned with personal, educational, and career goals.
 - B. Apply Idaho Student Learning Plan to selection of high school courses and pathways.

* Aligned to a corresponding standard in the Idaho [Workplace Skills for Career Readiness](#).

First Steps Pilot Outcomes

School Participation

Nine schools piloted the First Steps Standards in course offerings for their students.

- Aberdeen Middle School (Aberdeen)
- Fernwaters Public Charter School (Salmon)
- Fremont Middle School (Kuna)
- Jenifer Middle School (Lewiston)
- Jerome Middle School (Jerome)
- Lake Hazel Middle School (West Ada School District)
- Raft River Junior High School (Malta)
- Rigby Middle School (Rigby)
- Weiser Junior High School (Weiser)

In addition, West Ada School District and Kuna School District supported the First Steps Pilot at other middle schools in their districts. The “co-pilot” schools included:

- Kuna School District
 - Kuna Middle School
- West Ada School District
 - Eagle Middle School
 - Lewis Clark Middle School
 - Lowell Scott Middle School
 - Pathways Middle School
 - Star Middle School
 - Victory Middle School

Implementation

Pilot schools were encouraged to implement the First Steps Standards in the way that worked best for their schools to create models of implantation that could serve examples to other middle schools across the state with similar circumstances.

Duration of Course Offering

- 50% Semester
- 37.5% Quarter
- 12.5% Trimester

Method of Delivery

- 75% Stand-alone course
- 12.4% Stand-alone and embedded in another program focused course
- 12.5% Utilized IDLA course specifically aligned with First Steps Standards

Student Participation

A total of 2,791 students participated in the First Steps Pilot across Idaho.

- 1,657 at pilot schools
- 1,134 at co-pilot schools

Student Feedback

Participating students (n=85 spanning grades 6-8) at three pilot schools responded to an exit survey and provided feedback about their experience, rating their learning on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) and providing comments. The average ratings indicate the following:

Domain 1 – Self Evaluation

- 3.56 In this class, I learned about my personality. Now, I better understand what makes me unique.
- 3.80 In this class, I identified my interests and what I enjoy doing.
- 3.67 In this class, I identified my values, Now, I better understand what’s important to me.
- 3.29 In this class, I learned to recognize a problem and work through a process to solve it.
- 4.18 In this class, I learned about work ethic and its importance in the workplace.

- Percent of respondents who rated learning and demonstrating the following at a 4 or 5:
 - Diligence – 51.76%
 - Dependability – 75.29%
 - Responsibility – 82.35%
 - Accountability – 81.18%
- Percent of respondents who rated learning and being more careful about information security at 4 or 5:
 - My presence on social media – 63.53%
 - Risk taking on social media – 70.59%
 - Protecting my information – 77.65%
 - Using the internet – 72.94%
 - Emailing – 63.53%

Domain 2 – Career Exploration

- 4.08 I can explain the purpose and value of working.
- 4.00 I used what I learned about myself (personality, interests, values, skills) and the experiences I had in this class to help me find careers that interests me.
- 4.18 I know how to research to find out the education and/or training required, the demand for the career and the expected wages.
- 4.51 I understand how my personal, educational, and career choices will impact my life later.

Domain 3 – Future Planning

- 3.60 I know how to research a major at a college or university.
- 3.93 I know how to find classes to take in high school that are related to a career that I find interesting.
- 3.96 In this class, I learned a process for goal setting and now know how to set short-term and long-term goals for myself and my future.
- 3.73 In this class, I learned how to manage my time to complete school work and other tasks by the due date.
- 3.53 I know about the CTE programs available to me in high school or how to find out about them and who to go to with questions.
- 3.87 I know about opportunities available to me in high school (Advanced Placement (AP) classes, Dual Credit (DC) classes, sports, clubs, activities, etc.).
- 3.56 I have started my "Four Year Plan" using what I learned about myself in this class.
- 4.08 I plan to or have already used what I learned about myself and my career interest in this class to choose my high school classes.

Student Comments

What was your favorite thing about this class?

“My favorite thing about this class was exploring different careers that interest me and getting to know myself as a person better.” – 8th grader

“The guest speakers.” – 8th grader

“I liked learning about myself and taking personality tests to see what jobs fit me.”- 8th grader

"I enjoyed learning about all the different careers and finding which ones were right for me." – 8th grader

"The life questions, I needed to know how I am supposed to live as an adult, and my parents helped me with that as well." – 8th grader

"That it was fun to learn the jobs that you can do and the wages." – 6th grader

"Being able to learn about myself and what comes after high school." – 8th grader

"How it seemed hard but it was easy to understand in the end." – 8th grader

"Learning more about myself and what I want to do when I'm older." – 8th grader

What will you tell your friends about this class?

"That it was a good way to learn about how to choose a career and understand important career decisions." – 8th grader

"They should take the elective so they get an understanding for all the opportunities they have in high school." – 8th grader

"I would tell them that this class helped me understand myself more and who I am as a person, and relieved some stress that I had about the future." – 8th grader

"It was a good class that made you look at adulthood and making decisions from a different perspective, how everything isn't always set for you." – 8th grader

"I would highly recommend it to them, you learn a lot about yourself." – 8th grader

"I will (and have told) my friends that this class would not only be fun for them to take, but also would be an amazing self-investment for them now and in the future." – 8th grader

"I would tell my friends that I learned more about myself, and how what I like can lead me to a good career choice." – 8th grader

Any Final Thoughts?

"I personally think it should be required because I was able to learn about how to save and spend effectively and how my choices right now will impact my future." – 8th grader

"I think this class should become mandatory, because you learn all about things they never teach you anywhere else." – 8th grader

For more information about the Idaho Middle School CTE Initiative or First Steps please contact Jenni Bradford (jenni.bradford@cte.idaho.gov), Senior Program Quality Manager at IDCTE.