



Stakeholder Report
November 2025

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I. Overview

- *Engage students in career pathways that span grades 6-12.*
- *Expand opportunities for ship-based learning.*
- *Encourage collaboration in maritime career learning.*

These are the primary recommendations of the Core Plus Maritime stakeholder report submitted to the Washington State Legislature. Governor and Board of Education by November 15, 2025, as directed by Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2236.

Background

ESHB 2236 was unanimously passed by the Legislature in 2024. It recognizes Core Plus as “an unprecedented success” in Washington state career learning.

According to ESHB 2236: *“For more than a decade, (Core Plus) programs, and the rigorous career and technical education curricula they incorporate, have prepared students for structured pathways to employment, and presented employers with an expanded pool of candidates with relevant skills and abilities.”*

The program was launched in 2012 at a dozen high schools with manufacturing skills instruction for 588 students. In 2024, Core Plus supported programs at 100 schools where teachers provided instruction to 8,000 students in programs for aerospace, advanced manufacturing, construction and maritime. Of those totals, Core Plus Maritime supported teachers from 30 schools who taught more than 2,000 students.

The Model

ESHB 2236 identified these foundations of the Core Plus program model:

- Employer sourced curriculum.
- Employer support for teacher training in how to best use the curriculum, and
- Employer support for work-based learning experiences for students, ranging from field trips and career fairs to internships and entry-level job opportunities for graduates.

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Student Outcomes

Job placements are difficult to track because the state does not record those outcomes. It appears most Core Plus graduates continue on to post-secondary programs.

The Boeing Company has hired about 1,200 Core Plus graduates. The most successful teacher for maritime job placements is probably Bela Kovacs, who teaches metal fabricating at the West Sound Technical Skill Center high school in Bremerton.

Nine of his graduates were hired last June by the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard. In all, he estimates that 260 of his graduates have found jobs at the navy shipyard and other employers around Puget Sound. Others continued their educations in post-secondary programs throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Kovacs' success is due to his talent for teaching, but he gives Core Plus credit for helping him to fine tune his program.

“Being part of Core Plus over the last eight years has been one of the most valuable experiences of my career. It helps me keep my equipment up to date. It enables me to collaborate with other instructors, and it enables me to participate in meaningful, relevant professional development. Core Plus Maritime has truly become the best program I have ever been part of.”

Pushing the Easy Button

Employers who try it find value in Core Plus because it directly connects them with students who want to go to work for them. Employers and students meet through job fairs and regional Try a Trade events. Core Plus Maritime also conducts Reverse Job Fairs where employers visit local shop programs to help students prepare resumes and participate in mock job interviews.

Safe Boats International, a boat builder based in Kitsap County, hires graduates from Core Plus programs. Safe Boats International Human Resources officer Cindy McFarland calls Core Plus the “Easy Button” for HR departments.

“Core Plus Maritime provides employers an inside track to students. Employers can go into classrooms full of interested students. It is like working from a mailing list of people who want to hear from you. It’s like pushing the ‘easy button’ when you need to find employees.”

Parent Responses

Parents also give Core Plus high marks, according to a statewide survey of 600 voters conducted in 2022 by the polling firm, Strategies 360. The pollster reported:

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“After hearing a brief, factual description of the program, an incredible 96% of voters say they have a favorable impression of Core Plus. Over three-quarters support expanding the curriculum so that it is offered in more high schools across the state, and 87% of parents want their children to consider enrolling in the program.”

II. Policy Directives

ESHB 2236 language can make it seem like the Core Plus “model” was in place when the program was launched, or that all local Core Plus programs are the same. In fact, the model evolved through trial and error over a decade of growth, shaped by instructive failures along with inspiring successes.

Teachers work from the same curriculum and have equal opportunities for professional development, but local programs vary as teachers develop what works best for their schools and local communities.

Looking forward, ESHB 2236 seeks a more comprehensive approach, directing stakeholders to identify findings and recommendations to expand and enhance the program.

More specifically, it directs stakeholders to recommend a model framework for the program; it seeks recommendations for applying the model in career sectors outside of manufacturing and construction, starting with Applied Health Care, and it asks stakeholders to identify relevant governance and funding issues.

III. Findings

Teacher Focus

Maritime stakeholders find that of the three foundations for the program model, the most consequential is number two – employer support for teacher training, known more properly as “professional development.”

K-12 teachers are required to participate in continuing education experiences to maintain their teaching credentials. Teachers often rely on their professional associations to meet this requirement through workshops conducted at regional conferences held at convention centers and hotels.

As Core Plus evolved, employers began to augment these experiences by offering professional development experiences at work sites including shipyards and aerospace facilities, or events like the Seattle Boat Show. Teacher responses were, and are, favorable.

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The following review is offered by Jeff Winn, who teaches boat building at South Kitsap High School. In 2024, Winn received a \$100,000 award from Harbor Freight Tools after being named one of the best shop teachers in the United States.

“Being part of Core Plus Maritime has truly transformed my teaching. The opportunity to network with other teachers and industry partners has been invaluable, expanding both my professional growth and my students' opportunities. The professional development offered is top-notch, and I love how working with Core Plus Maritime brings the maritime industry to life in such a fun and engaging way. It has been an incredible resource for both me and my students.”

Governance & Funding

The Washington State Constitution is ambiguous about which elected leader in our state might be ultimately responsible for career learning programs. This can lead to challenges that will not be plumbed here.

The need for a more successful approach was illustrated at the conclusion of the 2025 Legislative session when legislators eliminated the state’s \$3 million contribution to Core Plus.

One year after recognizing the program as “an unprecedented success, the Legislature cut state support by 100%.

Supporters in the Legislature say the cut was not aimed at Core Plus but resulted from the elimination of three different budget categories that had provided different pots of money to support the program as it evolved since 2012. They say they will try to restore state funding, hopefully in a more enduring, singular manner.

IV. Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Middle School Gateway

CPM stakeholders recommend creation of a new model framework for Core Plus that spans grades 6-12. The present framework focuses on students in grades 11 and 12.

The new framework should begin in grades 6-8 with experiences that enable students to consider career-focused pathways when they prepare their state-mandated High School and Beyond Plans in grades 7 and 8.

If Core Plus supported programs in grades 11 and 12 can reach 8,000 students, enrollment might increase significantly if student pathways begin in grades 6-8.

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US Navy STEM

The framework recommendation grew from the success of a professional development program in the 2024-2025 school year in which CPM instructors learned how to teach their students to assemble, operate and adapt Submersible Remotely Operated Vehicles (SROVs).

The indispensable partner for this effort was the US Navy STEM Team at the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and the US Navy Undersea Warfare Center. The STEM team has offered this program for more than a decade to teachers and students in grades 5-12 on the Olympic Peninsula.

Maritime + Aerospace

Teachers and staff from Core Plus Aerospace joined the 2024-2025 SROV initiative due to the science and skill standards shared by ship and aircraft manufacturing.

Forty six teachers participated in SROV workshops. Some started building SROVs immediately with their students. One aerospace teacher from Puyallup, Dave Cerio, reported the following:

“This has been an amazing experience. The kids love it. Come on by and talk to the kids and see for yourselves. Next week the students will be soldering the switches and doing test dives in “The Depths of The Salty Sea of Cerio.”

Shop equipment is not required to teach with SROVs. Any academic classroom (and teacher) can do it with inexpensive hand tools and portable water containers that can be folded and stored when not in use.

Recommendation 2

More Ship-based Learning

In 2025, the Legislature augmented ESHB 2236 with House Bill 1167, which required stakeholders to expand opportunities for students to engage in learning that aligns with global merchant marine Standards for Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCWs).

The STCWs do not meet the curriculum requirement for the Core Plus model because it is not a curriculum. It is instead an exhaustive list of all the skills that must be mastered by the world’s ocean-going mariners, from beginners – Ordinary Seafarers – to officers in the pilot house who guide and command ships.

These skills are learned through a succession of short-term professional training sessions administered by the United States Coast Guard. Pay ranges from good to great, with officers able to earn outstanding salaries without ever setting foot in college, although many of them do.

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Entry-level STCW skills align with those taught in a variety of existing high school programs. If teachers have opportunities to learn more about these shared skills, they can help students realize they are being prepared for success in the global STCW system.

WSF Field Trips

CPM introduced teachers and students to ship-based learning in 2023 and 2024 through a series of highly successful field trips on board Washington State Ferries as they crossed Puget Sound.

With adult escorts, students visited ferry engine rooms and pilot houses, engaged in conversations with ferry mariners, and participated in deck-hand drills for firefighting, lifesaving, and ship evacuation.

For many students, these WSF experiences provided their first personal experiences with the marine environment of Puget Sound. The trips provided students with inspiring views of frolicking killer whales, US Navy war ships, industrial grade commercial fishing boats, barking seals, enormous yachts, tugboats moving ships and barges and tiny pleasure craft.

Sixty two Core Plus students completed written surveys about their WSF experiences. Twenty three said it made them want to work for WSF. Thirty one said it made them “maybe” want to work for WSF. These 54 positive responders compared with just six who said they would not want to work for WSF.

In the 2024-2025 school year, the Black Ball Ferry Line provided similar experiences for students in a Core Plus-supported program at Port Angeles High School. Those experiences on ferry runs between Port Angeles and Victoria, British Columbia, were also highly impactful.

New Horizons

Ship-based learning experiences show legislators were right to assume the Core Plus model can work outside the fields of construction and manufacturing. Marine transportation skills cover those taught in high school programs for automotive and diesel technology, firefighting, emergency medical care, law enforcement and national service in the military or US Coast Guard.

Students must be at least 18 years old to earn STCW credentials, but the skill requirements align with many that can be learned in high school.

And while the STCWs are not required to get jobs on commercial fishing boats, they cover safety and technology skills that are in high demand for those who fish in the North Pacific.

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Sea Scouts

The maritime application of Scouting brings three major assets to STCW-aligned learning – boats, insurance, and adult volunteers with experience in training young people to work on the water safely and productively.

Sea Scout participation is available for youths ages 13 to 21. Student learning onboard boats during the school day is problematic for school district risk managers, but Sea Scout activities are extra-curricular and are supported by multiple insurance options.

Initial engagement between Sea Scouts and Core Plus occurred through the Lake Union-based chapter of Sea Scouts in Seattle and the Core Plus supported metal shop at Mount Si High School in the foothills of the Cascades. The partners met through a Core Plus event at the Seattle Boat Show sponsored by the Northwest Marine Trade Association.

Students from the shop now make replacement parts for the Sea Scout boat, the *SSS Propeller*, and one Mount Si student has joined the Seattle chapter despite the long drive to Lake Union.

Sea Scout troops, including the *SSS Propeller*, take students on journeys that span the Salish Sea and stretch all the way to southeast Alaska.

STEM + STCWs

The *Propeller* team and CPM are now exploring partnership opportunities with additional schools that might want to follow the Mt. Si High School where STEM-based learning in manufacturing leads to STCW-aligned student experiences onboard Sea Scout boats.

The Moku Ahi

A new vessel is now being explored through Core Plus Maritime to support Sea Scouts and others who seek nautical training. That's the *Moku Ahi*, a 110-foot-long fireboat originally built to serve Honolulu, Hawaii. The ship carries four functioning water cannons and a large, mostly empty hull below decks that might provide spaces for students to build cabins and other accommodations.

The ship is presently undergoing renovations while Core Plus Maritime stakeholders look for moorage possibilities and school partners on Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

Culturally Empowered Career Learning

For seven years, Core Plus has engaged with William Monette, an outstanding teacher at Neah Bay High School on Cape Flattery, the ancestral home of the Makah Tribe.

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Monette infuses his shop program with Makah culture and lessons from the Pacific Ocean. His success gave rise to the term, Culturally Empowered Career Learning.

The term describes a phenomenon that applies to many of us. Who and where we come from often determines the career choices we might pursue.

For Makah students, that might mean commercial fishing and harvesting Cape Flattery's robust timber resources. In fact, the tribe recently opened a brand new sawmill. These aspects of Makah life are infused into Monette's shop program, with instruction in woodworking, metal fabricating, and Makah techniques to prepare the outstanding seafood resources of the North Pacific.

Recommendation 3

More Collaboration

When Core Plus began in 2012, high school programs for maritime were few and far between. Today, they abound. Core Plus partner schools extend from the Columbia River to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, with schools wanting to join from Southeast Alaska.

Other promising, independent efforts are underway in Tacoma, Burien, Seattle and Everett.

It might be of value for these efforts to compare notes as they face similar challenges and opportunities for long-term success.

Collaboration could begin with professional development workshops that gather all the teachers in inspiring locations.

We Can-Am

Collaboration of this type is one goal of a partnership now coming together through Core Plus Maritime and the shop teachers who belong to the British Columbia Technology Education Association and the Washington Industrial Technical Education Association.

The two groups seek to engage in exchange visits, with Washington teachers visiting industrial employers in BC, and BC teachers visiting employers down here. The visits will be accompanied by teacher discussions about best practices and better ideas for connecting more youth with the growing career opportunities in the essential - and even quintessential - Pacific Northwest industries in ship and boat building, marine transportation and commercial fishing along with aviation and commercial aircraft manufacturing.

Both groups see the effort also as part of a Friendship Renewal Initiative that might help make up for recent policy disagreements at the national level.

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The partnership also coincides with an era when both nations are conducting major efforts to ramp up North American ship building and merchant marine capacity for national security and commercial purposes.

V. Conclusion

A Longer View

After a dozen years of experience, Core Plus stakeholders can look back and see the long-term value of the program.

Rainier Beach High School in south Seattle was one of the 12 pilot sites where Core Plus was launched in 2012. In 2011, a visit to the school by employers found the high school's old metal shop with a padlock on the door, and cobwebs covering the equipment.

With the help of employers and the statewide Core Plus initiative, the shop was cleaned up and re-opened under the guidance of an inspiring teacher, Chris Names.

Career Success

By 2014, Dallas Baker joined the list of graduates who found career pathways through the program. After graduation, he landed a job at B&G Machine, a Seattle-based firm that rebuilds diesel engines components. He started as a helper, then worked his way up to Crankshaft Supervisor.

B&G owner, Johnny Bianchi, describes the job this way:

“Dallas works in a world of micro finishes and measurements. He is able to consistently, by hand, grind and measure shafts to within 0.0002, that’s two thousandths of an inch, less than 1/30th of a human hair - on shafts up to 10 feet long and weighing up to 4000 lbs.”

Dallas says of his experience with Core Plus:

“I’ve always been a hands-on, mechanically minded person and after the first day in that class I knew it was for me. Not only learning in a machine shop environment but getting to meet and see people working in the industry helped me choose a career path that was right for me.”

“After the program was over the Core Plus crew helped me land a job in a field that I love, and I am still in to this day.”

Malcolm Dunston

In 2017, graduates of the RBHS program included Malcolm Dunston.

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Malcolm was a good fullback for the Rainier Beach football team. But, in addition to butting heads on the football field, Malcolm broke stereotypes. Some are skeptical that young African Americans like Malcolm would be interested in either aerospace or maritime.

After graduation, Malcolm landed a job at the CSR Marine shipyard in the heart of Ballard. After succeeding there, he moved on to another maritime worksite, then landed a job at Boeing, working as an entry-level aircraft assembler.

He could do the work at Boeing, but he did not like the routine. From there, he went back into maritime, landing a job as a tugboat crew member with Seattle-based DeForge Maritime Towing.

Of his time at RBHS, he says: *“Core Plus was hands-on, active, and a team environment – it was fun and showed me college and desk work weren’t my only options.”*

Now, he wants to help others follow in his footsteps - to the water.

“I want to say something to the African American kids who do not often see themselves in this type of environment or do not know these opportunities exist. You’ll see a lot of white men around boats, but don’t get discouraged. Work hard, don’t give up on yourself, take on the challenges. Maritime is worth it because you can see so much more of the world and all the other opportunities that come with it.”

“I want to pave a way for African Americans who don’t see themselves in this industry.”

ATTACHMENT ONE

Core Plus Maritime Advisory Committee

1. Alan Davis & Tim Dyasuk, American Seafoods
2. Brett Thompson & Jeff Brooks, Central Welding Supply
3. Cindy McFarland & Skeeter Judd, SAFE Boats International
4. JB Hallam, Trident Seafoods
5. Manning Webb, LiUNA Local Laborers 252
6. Scott Anderson, CSR Marine
7. Stephanie Bowman, Transportation Institute
8. Walter Stokman, Vigor Marine Group
9. Wes Fridell, North Harbor Diesel

ATTACHMENT TWO

Core Plus Maritime Engaged Schools

These schools have participated in the Core Plus Maritime network since 2022 through the grant program, professional development opportunities, design and adoption of curriculum, etc.

1. Alderwood Middle School
2. Anacortes High School
3. Bainbridge High School
4. Cascade High School
5. Cascadia Technical Academy
6. Central Kitsap High School
7. Centralia High School
8. Chief Kitsap Academy
9. Colville High School
10. East Valley High School
11. Enumclaw High School
12. Hudson Bay High School
13. Interlake High School
14. Kent-Meridian High School
15. Kingston Middle School
16. Kiona-Benton City High School
17. Liberty Bell Jr. Sr. High School
18. Lincoln High School
19. Lummi Nation
20. Meadowdale Middle School
21. Mount Si High School
22. Neah Bay High School
23. New Market Skills Center
24. Northwest Career & Technical Academy
25. North Mason High School
26. Ocosta High School
27. Port Angeles High School
28. Puget Sound Skills Center
29. Raymond High School
30. Renton School District
31. Republic High School
32. Rogers High School
33. Seattle Skill Center
34. Selah High School
35. Sno-Isle TECH Skills Center
36. South Bend High School
37. South Kitsap High School
38. Sunnyside High School
39. Tenino High School
40. Todd Beamer High School
41. Totem Middle School
42. Tulalip Heritage High School
43. West Sound Technical Skill Center
44. Wishkah Valley School District
45. Yakima Valley Technical Skills Center