



Workforce Training and
Education Coordinating Board

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CONSUMER ALERT: DO YOUR HOMEWORK BEFORE YOU ENROLL

Online consumer research tools available for Washington students

OLYMPIA—As the new school year gets underway, many Washington residents may consider investing in additional education and training. Such training has the potential to enhance productivity and lead to a better job. But before making a financial commitment, it's best to do some research to see if an education program can deliver the results promised.

"It's a great idea to add to your skills. But you will want to make sure first that the specific program you enroll in is going to be worth your time and money," said Eleni Papadakis, executive director of the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, the state agency responsible for licensing private vocational schools.

To protect consumers, private vocational schools must have a license to operate in Washington. But even if licensed, some schools might not be the right fit. Here are some tips on how to research a training program.

1. If it's a private vocational school, verify the school is licensed. View the list at www.wtb.wa.gov/currentlicensedschools.asp
2. Whether you're looking at a public or private school or college, determine what percentage of the school's graduates find jobs. Programs whose graduates meet minimum employment and earnings thresholds are often on the state's Eligible Training Provider list. This list, and other helpful information about 6,000 Washington education programs, is at www.CareerBridge.wa.gov.
3. Determine if you will need a state license to practice your chosen occupation. Licensing requirements are managed by a variety of agencies but there is a master list here: <http://www.dol.wa.gov/listoflicenses.html>
4. If this occupation is new to you, learn more about it first. Ask a professional if you can follow them around for a couple of days (job shadow).
5. Does the occupation you're training for pay enough to pay back your tuition costs? Get earnings data on hundreds of occupations with Career Bridge's View Job Trends.

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6. Tour the classroom facility. Ideally you should tour it while classes are going on. Is the equipment up to date? Are the instructors knowledgeable? Do the students look engaged? If possible ask the students how satisfied they are with the program.
7. Get the school's refund policy in writing. There can be significant differences between refund policies at public and private institutions.

For a **complete list of questions** to consider when looking for a private career school, go to www.wtb.wa.gov/ChoosingASchool.asp

The Workforce Board is a state agency that monitors and evaluates the state's key workforce programs and also provides leadership on policies that help all Washington residents get the education and training they need to obtain living-wage jobs. The Workforce Board is also the state licensing agency for private career schools.