158.809   Virtual computer science career academy -- Development and requirements -- Annual reports.

(1)   It is the intention of the General Assembly to increase the Commonwealth's economic competitiveness in the technology and computing employment sector by significantly increasing the capacity to educate and prepare high school students for the technology workforce. A virtual computer science career academy shall be established to expand access to accelerated, early college career pathways for Kentucky high school students and prepare them for careers in computing, particularly in the field of data science. Principal activities for developing, coordinating, and implementing the academy shall be conducted by WeLeadCS, a private, nonprofit corporation composed of leaders from education, government, and technology and computing sector employers.

(2)   WeLeadCS may solicit, accept, receive, invest, and expend funds from any public or private source for the purpose of implementing the provisions in this section.

(3)   WeLeadCS shall:

(a)   Establish a program in which Kentucky teachers provide virtual, synchronous instruction for dual college credit computing courses to accelerate students' completion of computer science degrees and development of the academic knowledge, technical skills, and employability skills necessary for careers in high-level computing occupations;

(b)   Collaborate with the Kentucky Center for Statistics to define workforce needs and opportunities in the technology and computing sector in each local workforce development area;

(c)   Develop the nation's first sequential high school career pathway preparing students for careers in data science. The career pathway shall include opportunities for students to earn industry certifications prioritized by employers and college credit for courses that will culminate in accelerated postsecondary degree completion;

(d)   Partner with employers in the technology and computing sector to provide a work-based learning program to connect student learning to real-world practices, expose students to a variety of career options with the technology and computing sector, ensure students develop the tools necessary to compete in the workforce, and provide opportunities for job shadowing, internships, and apprenticeships;

(e)   Collaborate with employers, K-12 and postsecondary school educators, and state education leaders to develop local and statewide initiatives to raise awareness of career opportunities in the technology and computing sector, particularly in data science;

(f)   Advise students in the virtual academy about Kentucky postsecondary degree opportunities in computer science in demand by employers in the technology and computing sector, transferring college credits earned through the academy to expedite and reduce costs of college degree completion, and aligning personal skills and academic abilities to postsecondary degree requirements

and employers' expectations;

(g)   Recruit and train Kentucky certified teachers to deliver high-quality, synchronous virtual instruction and support students in a virtual learning environment;

(h)   Coordinate with the Kentucky Department of Education, local school districts, and postsecondary institutions to ensure compliance with statutes and regulations governing student privacy, grading, articulation agreements, student transcripts, and other administrative details; and

(i)   Submit an annual report to the Kentucky Board of Education and the Legislative Research Commission on the academy, including but not limited to student enrollment, course completion, college credit hours earned, industry certifications earned, and student matriculation to postsecondary institutions.

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