

ASA

High School Work-Based Learning

An opportunity to build skills and improve student engagement in TN

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ASA® is a national nonprofit committed to helping kids-- as young as Middle School-- know themselves, know their options, and make informed choices to achieve their education and career goals.

- We are committed to helping students:
 - Explore education & career options starting in middle school
 - Experiment through hands-on learning opportunities
 - Execute a plan to meet their goals





Work-based learning in high school can address to parallel challenges:

Skills Gap

Student Engagement



A photograph of two men in business attire shaking hands in a modern office. The man on the left is wearing a brown blazer and glasses, while the man on the right is wearing a dark suit, glasses, and has a beard. They are standing in front of a whiteboard and a shelf filled with binders. The background is a brick wall with modern pendant lights.

54% of employers say it's hard to find the right skills when hiring

41% of college students feel unprepared for work

8% Entry-level employees prepared to contribute immediately

Skills Gap Reality

Employer vs. Student Perception of Proficiency in Career Readiness Competencies, by Percentage of Respondents

COMPETENCY	% OF EMPLOYERS THAT RATED RECENT GRADS PROFICIENT*	% OF STUDENTS WHO CONSIDERED THEMSELVES PROFICIENT**
Professionalism/Work Ethic	42.5%	89.4%
Oral/Written Communications	41.6%	79.4%
Critical Thinking/Problem Solving	55.8%	79.9%
Teamwork/Collaboration	77.0%	85.1%
Leadership	33.0%	70.5%
Digital Technology	65.8%	59.9%
Career Management	17.3%	40.9%
Global/Intercultural Fluency	20.7%	34.9%

National Association of Colleges and Employers

*The percentages corresponding to “rated proficient” represent, among all responding employers, the percentage who, on a five-point scale, rated recent graduates either “very” (4) or “extremely” (5) proficient in the respective competency.

**The percentages corresponding to "considered proficient" represent, among all graduating seniors from the Class of 2017, the percentage who, on a five-point scale, considered himself/herself either "very" (4) or "extremely" (5) proficient in the respective competency.

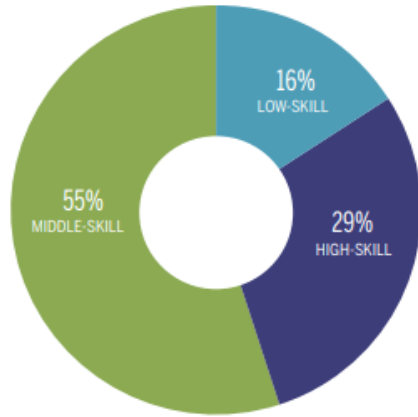


Southern Skills Gap

- ❖ Over the next decade, nearly four million manufacturing jobs likely need to be filled, and the skills gap is expected to result in **2.1 million** of those jobs going unfilled. [Deloitte and the Manufacturing Institute](#)
- ❖ Manufacturers surveyed reported that finding the right talent is now **36% harder** than it was in 2018
- ❖ This week, Bureau of Labor Statistics reported a record spike in open manufacturing jobs nationwide from 134,000 positions in Feb. to **706,000** in March 2021.

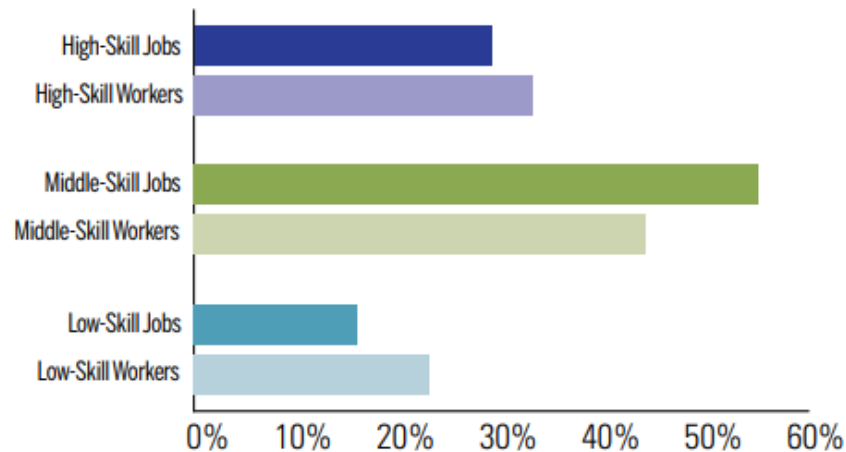
MOST JOBS IN THE SOUTH ARE MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS

JOBS BY SKILL LEVEL, AMERICAN SOUTH, 2015



Source: NSC analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics

MOST SOUTHERN JOBS ARE MIDDLE-SKILL JOBS, BUT NOT ENOUGH WORKERS ARE TRAINED TO THE MIDDLE-SKILL LEVEL



Source: NSC Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment Statistics by State, May 2015 and American Community Survey data, 2015.

As of 2018,

- middle-skill jobs account for **58 percent** of Tennessee's labor market,
- but only **45 percent** of the state's workers are trained to the middle-skill level.

(Federal Reserve Banks of Atlanta and St. Louis)

Middle skill jobs require education and training beyond high school, but not necessarily a four-year degree



1979:
60% of
teenagers
employed

2019:
35% of
teenagers
employed

Exposure to
workforce



Skill
Development

Social
Capital:
50%
of jobs come
through personal
connections

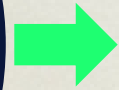
Occupational
Identity

“A child’s network—his reservoir of social capital and ability to bank on that capital for support, advice, or opportunities down the line—remains largely determined by random luck.”

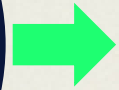
Julia Freeland Fisher

What youth are
missing by being
absent from the
workforce

Lack of job
experience for
youth



Decreased
occupational
identity



Lack of skill
development



Increased
skill gap

Skills Gap





Defined as
attention to
the area of
focus, active
participation in
learning, and
time on task.

Strongly
linked to
academic
performance
and student
achievement.

129%
higher rate of
students
exceeding
progress in all
subjects

Student Engagement



Covid engagement crisis

Schools across the nation are struggling to reengage students after a year of major academic disruption

- From at least March to October 2020, [about 3 million](#) of the most at-risk students may not have received any formal education, virtual or in-person
- School enrollment has dropped dramatically, absenteeism is up and hundreds of thousand of students are unaccounted for in the education system
- Nationally, daily student absence rates have nearly doubled, from an average of 6 percent before the pandemic to 10 percent this fall (EDWeek Research Center)



Chronic
absenteeism
dropped from
13.6% to
13.1%
(2017-2019)

However,
25% of high
school seniors
were chronically
absent (missed
18 or more
school days)

Absenteeism in Tennessee Pre-Pandemic

Metro Nashville Public
School Dec. 2020

- 26% of students
absent more than
5 days (21,904)
- 4,801 MNPS
absent 20 or more

Shelby County
Aug - Nov 19, 2020

- 20% of students
absent more than
5 days (23,567
students)
- 1,200 had 30 or
more unexcused
absences

Absenteeism in
Tennessee
Post- Pandemic

Results of disengagement

The Silent Epidemic: Perspectives of High School Dropouts Civic Enterprises with Peter D. Hart Research Associates for the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Reasons for dropping out:

- 47 percent were bored with school
- 69 percent were not motivated or inspired to work hard

Report Recommendation:

Make school more engaging through real-world, experiential learning. Students want to see the connection between school and work.

81 percent said there should be more opportunities for real-world learning. Students need to see the connection between school and getting a good job.





Keys to Student Engagement

1. **Relevance:** Make connections to students' lived experiences and interests.
2. **Authenticity:** Emphasize real-world connections that require students to solve real-world problems. Ensure the task has utility value for students so that they see that the learned content or skill will be useful to them beyond school.
3. **Collaboration:** Incorporate opportunities for students to collaborate in pairs or small groups.
4. **Autonomy:** Support student autonomy within the task by providing opportunities to make choices that are consistent with students' interests.
5. **Higher Thinking:** Support opportunities for critical thinking and deeper analysis of problems

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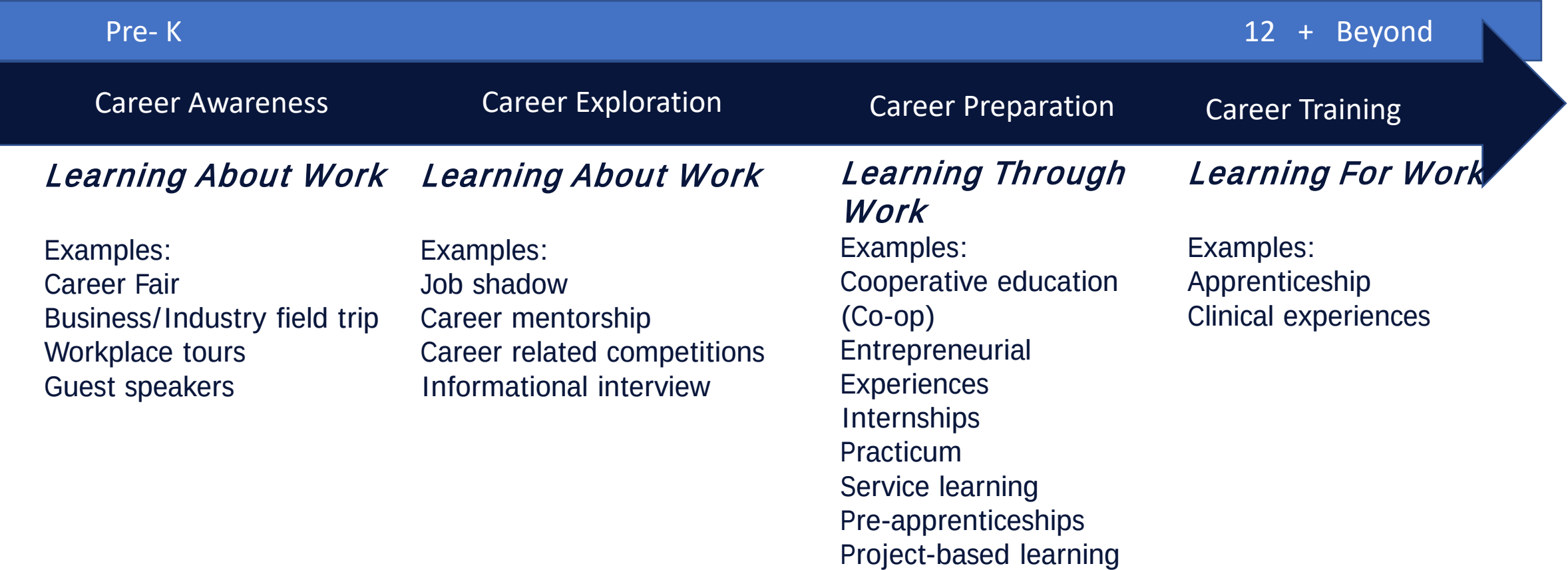
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Benefits of Work-Based Learning

- Reinforces the relevancy and authenticity of the learning experiences for students. (Lerman, 2010).
- Increases students' persistence, graduation, and employment rates, with notable gains for students from underserved racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Holzer & Lerman, 2014; Kuh, 2008; Lerman, 2010; National Survey of Student Engagement, 2007)
- Positively impacts students' development of critical skills (e.g., interpersonal competence and leadership), to apply theoretical concepts to practice, and crystalize career plans and work-place identity.



Work-Based Learning Continuum





Student Interest in Work-based Learning

- **79%** of students say they are interested in an internship or other work-based learning experience.
- Students are interested
 - to gain skills (66%),
 - to explore career fields (52%).
- Only **34%** of students have heard of available opportunities for high school students.

Companies Do Not Generally Offer High School Internships

- Majority of companies do not offer high school internships or other work-based learning experience.
 - no business need
 - no resources to support an intern
 - high schoolers aren't suited to the job
 - for liability issues
 - for budgetary reasons.





71% of companies would consider expanding work-based learning to high school students if:

Experiential

46% increase in workload suited to high school age
39% program guidelines

Financial

39% increase in funding

Management

34% increase in management staff
22% external management help

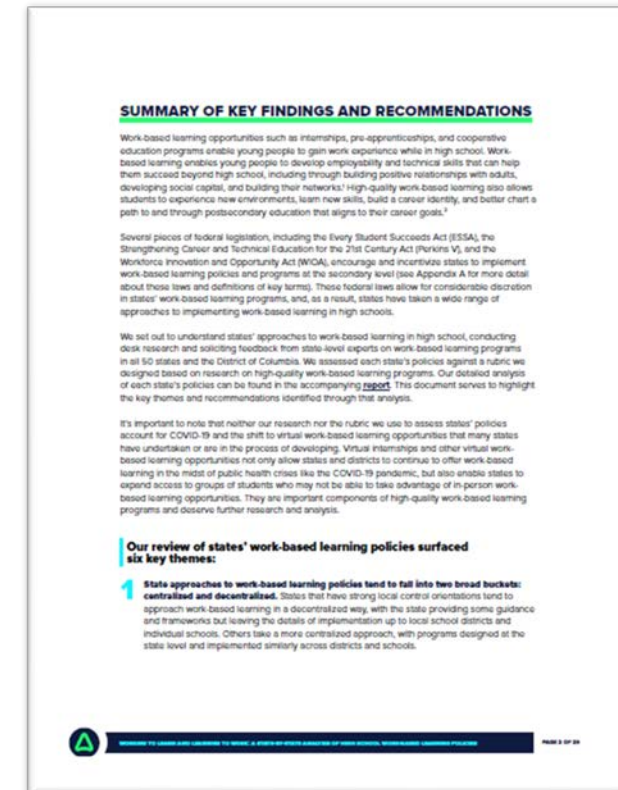
Recruiting

17% increase in recruiting staff
21% external recruitment help

ASA and Bellwether released a 50-state analysis of WBL policies

The report

- A slide deck summarizing work-based learning policies in all 50 states and DC
- A summary report that discusses key themes and offers recommendations



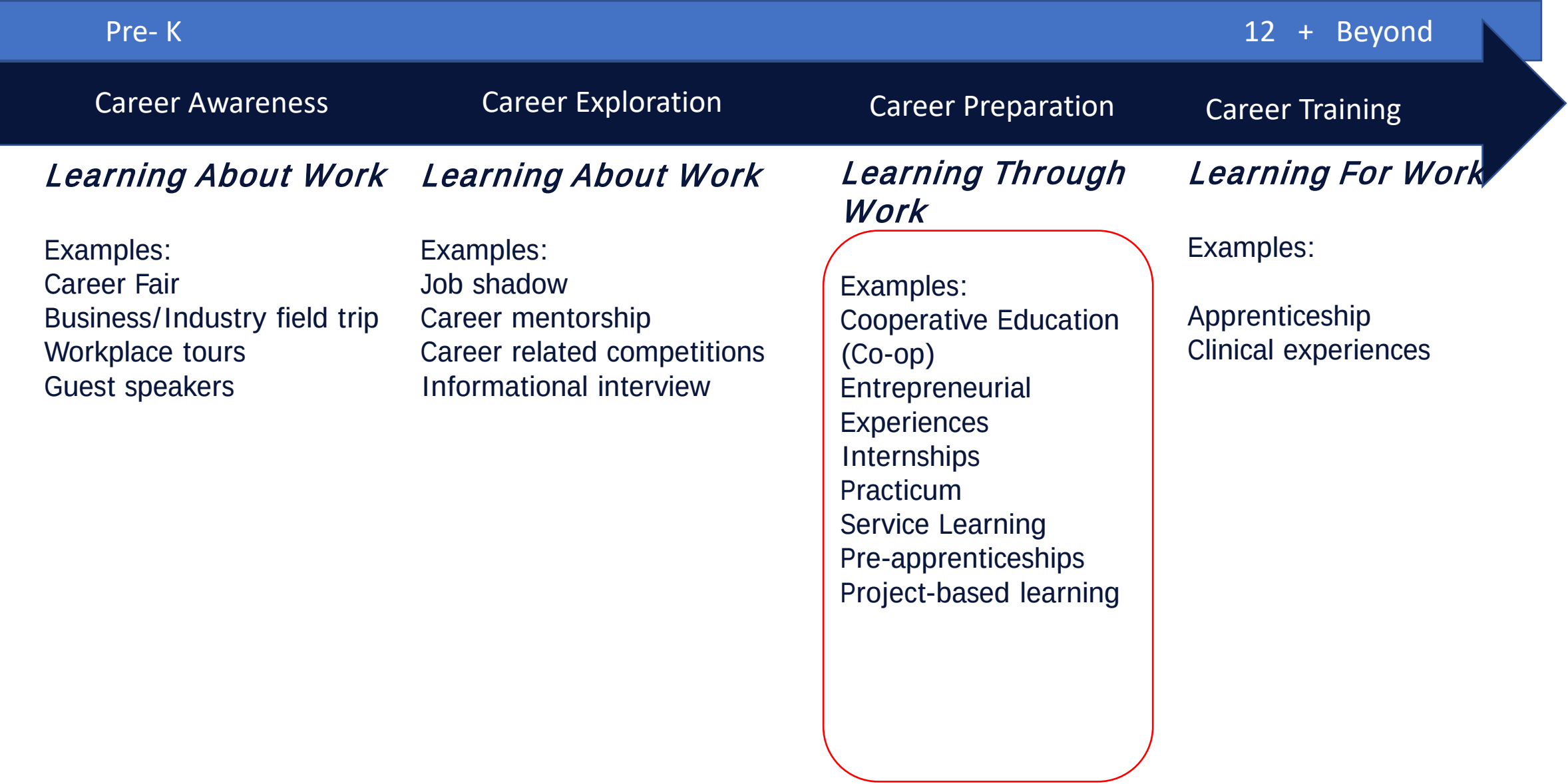
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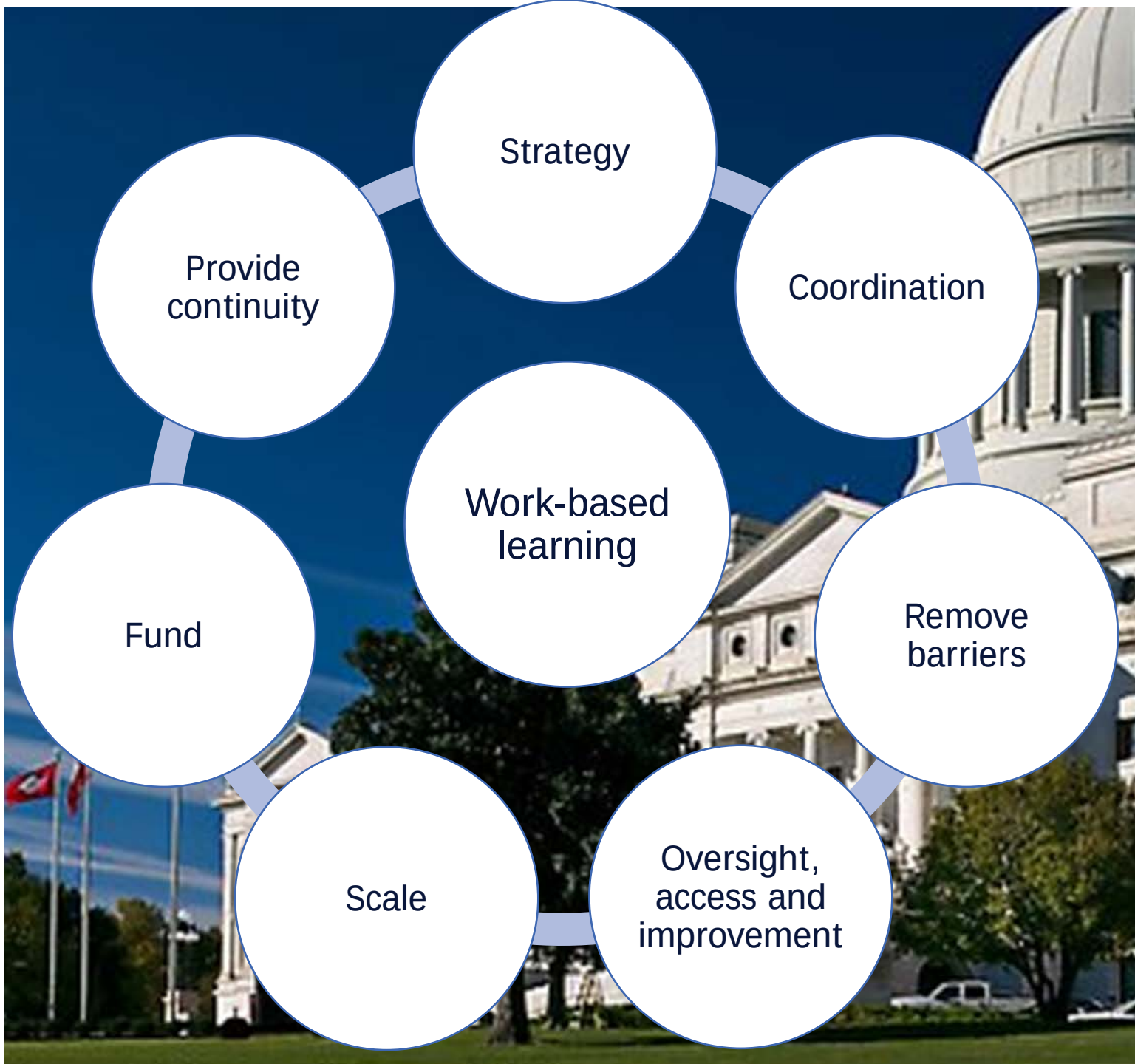
Our process

- We developed a rubric to assess states' work-based learning policies and conducted desk research to understand how states fared on each component of the rubric
- We sent our initial analyses to leaders in each state for their feedback (43 states responded) and updated as needed

Category	Criteria	Description
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Content of WBL policies	WBL as part of HS graduation requirements	Does state policy allow or require internships or other WBL opportunities to count for credit toward graduation?
	WBL eligibility	Are all high school students eligible for WBL opportunities, or is eligibility restricted to students enrolled in specific programs?
	Equity of access	Are there state policies designed to support access for underserved groups of students (e.g., preference for low-income students or students enrolled in low-performing schools, explicit supports for students with disabilities, transportation stipends, etc.)?
	Addressing policy barriers	Does state policy address key barriers to WBL?
WBL funding	Financial incentives	Are there financial incentives (e.g., tax credits) for employers that offer WBL opportunities to high school students?
	Dedicated federal funding	Does the state use its Perkins funding to support WBL?
	Dedicated state funding	Is there a dedicated source of state funding for WBL?
WBL support infrastructure	Statewide support infrastructure, intermediary, and/or public-private partnerships	Is there a system or organization designed to facilitate WBL opportunities and/or are there public-private partnerships that support access to paid or for-credit WBL opportunities for high school students?
	WBL communications infrastructure	Are there systems in place to communicate among schools, students, employers, and other stakeholders about WBL opportunities?
WBL quality	Experience quality	Is there a statewide framework in place that defines quality expectations for WBL experiences and holds employers accountable to those expectations?
	Program quality	Is there a statewide framework in place that defines quality expectations for WBL programs and holds schools/districts accountable to those expectations?
WBL accountability	Data collection	Is there a process in place to track student participation in WBL opportunities and their outcomes?
	Use of data to drive equity	Does the state disaggregate WBL data by student demographics and experience type?
	Use of data to drive quality	Does the state use disaggregated data as a component of its quality framework?

Work-Based Learning Continuum





Role for a state

The background of the slide is a photograph of the Massachusetts State House, a large, historic building with a prominent golden dome. The building is constructed of red brick with white columns and arches. A large, semi-transparent white circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title and list. The sky is clear and blue.

State models to support work-based learning

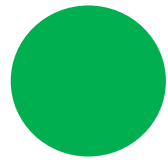
- Integrated as part of the school day for high school credit
- A summer experience
- With a third-party intermediary
- Coordinate by the school or school department
- Direct state funding
 - to the school as part of formula or as a grant
 - to an intermediary
 - to incentivize employers

We developed a rubric to evaluate states' WBL policies

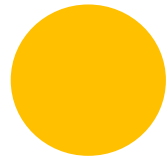
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We rated components of states' WBL policies using a color-coded scale

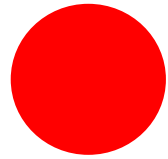
Exact definitions of red, yellow, and green vary for each component of the rubric, but they indicate general alignment to a “desired state”



Green ratings indicate that a state's policy reflects the desired state for a particular component



Yellow ratings indicate that a state's policy has elements of the desired state but that there is room for improvement



Red ratings indicate that a state's policy has no elements of the desired state or that a particular element is missing altogether

Several following slides offer more detail on the exact green/yellow/red ratings for each criterion. We intentionally held a high bar, and in several of our rating categories, few states earned our highest rating. We rated each category independently, and a high or low rating in one category did not necessarily lead to a high or low rating in another. Where states had multiple types of WBL programs, we did our best to describe those efforts and note how the various policies interacted with one another.

Criterion: WBL definition

	Red	Yellow	Green
Description of ratings	The state does not have a definition of WBL.	The state defines WBL in broad terms but does not specify what activities qualify as WBL.	The state has a definition of WBL that has a defined set of activities/experiences that qualify as WBL.
Number of states with each rating	1	5	45

Key Insights

- Establishing a sufficiently detailed definition of WBL provides a foundation on which high-quality opportunities and policies ensuring quality and equity of access are built.
- Defining specific activities and experiences helps ensure that schools know what they can offer to students, and that students know what experiences are available to them.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

Multiple states offer strong examples of WBL definitions. For example, **Alaska** defines work-based learning as “a coordinated effort between school districts and employers in the Alaska workforce, and refers to learning that results from work experience. It is an opportunity for our high school youth to see firsthand some of the various work environments, to experience some of the job duties for a brief period while receiving classroom credit.”

Key components of Alaska’s definition of WBL are that it has a work experience component, that the work experience is connected to instruction in the classroom, and that it is a planned learning activity. WBL can consist of internships, apprenticeships, paid student-learners, school-based enterprises, etc. Definitions of each are included in the state’s WBL guide.

Criterion: WBL as part of HS graduation requirements

	Red	Yellow	Green
Description of ratings	WBL does not count for credit toward graduation.	WBL counts as credit toward graduation but is not required for all students.	WBL is required for graduation from HS.
Number of states with each rating	0	51	0

Key Insights

- Requiring WBL for high school graduation helps ensure that students have the opportunity to develop workplace and job-embedded skills and competencies and gain work experience regardless of their immediate postsecondary plans.
- All states allow WBL opportunities to count for credit toward graduation.
- In some states, WBL is required for certain students, such as those pursuing a CTE certificate or graduation pathway. However, no states require *all students* to participate in WBL in order to graduate.

STATE HIGHLIGHTS

While no state currently requires students to participate in a work-based learning experience to graduate, some states have structures in place that lay the foundation for doing so. **Oregon**, for example, requires students to participate in career-related learning experiences. These can include WBL experiences like internships or apprenticeships, but they can also be other opportunities, such as field trips, guest speakers, or job shadows. Beginning with the class of 2023, **Oklahoma** students will be required to participate in service learning or work-based learning at least once in grades 9-12 to meet graduation requirements.

Summary: Tennessee

Category	Criteria	Rating
Existence of WBL policy	WBL definition	
Content of WBL policies	WBL as part of HS graduation requirements	
	WBL eligibility	
	Equity of access	
	Addressing policy barriers	
WBL funding	Financial incentives	
	Dedicated federal funding	
	Dedicated state funding	
WBL support infrastructure	Statewide support infrastructure, intermediary, and/or public-private partnerships	
	WBL communications infrastructure	
WBL quality	Experience quality	
	Program quality	
WBL accountability	Data collection	
	Use of data to drive equity	
	Use of data to drive quality	

Tennessee [graduation requirements](#) include a three-credit “elective focus.” Credit-bearing, capstone work-based learning courses (which include apprenticeships, internships, clinical experiences, or other practicum placements) may count toward this requirement when the experience aligns with the other courses taken in sequence. Students should use their chosen elective focus and their high school [Plan of Study](#) as the basis for their capstone WBL experience. Students who are 16 years or older may participate in capstone WBL placements for credit. Up to two academic WBL credits may be earned per year, including the summer term but excluding the extended school year.

The state Department of Education has developed both a [policy guide](#) and a longer [implementation guide](#) to support districts in implementing WBL; this guide includes some definitions/characteristics of quality programs and experiences. In its [Perkins V plan](#), the state has set a goal to double enrollment in WBL courses by 2024.

In addition, [Tennessee Pathways](#) supports alignment among K-12, postsecondary, and industry to ensure young people have the education and training they need to transition successfully into postsecondary institutions and the workforce. The Tennessee Pathways website includes a tool that allows users to identify career pathway opportunities in their communities and connect with partners and regional coordinators. Districts can earn [Tennessee Pathways Certification](#), indicating strong alignment among high school, postsecondary, and employment opportunities.

Detail: Tennessee

Category	Criteria	Description	Rating	Explanation of state's rating
Existence of WBL policy	WBL definition	Does the state have a formal definition of WBL that includes opportunities for high school students?		The Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) has a definition of WBL and defines a set of WBL experiences .
Content of WBL policies	WBL as part of HS graduation requirements	Does state policy allow or require internships or other WBL opportunities to count for credit toward graduation?		Tennessee graduation requirements include a three-credit “elective focus.” Credit-bearing, capstone work-based learning courses may count toward this requirement when the experience aligns with the other courses taken in sequence. WBL courses are not required for graduation, however.
	WBL eligibility	Are all high school students eligible for WBL opportunities, or is eligibility restricted to students enrolled in specific programs?		Tennessee does not have state-level restrictions on student eligibility for WBL experiences.
	Equity of access	Are there state policies designed to support access for underserved groups of students?		The Tennessee Department of Education put together an FAQ document on WBL and special education , which answers some questions about enrollment in WBL for students with IEPs. It does not, however, note any specific policies or supports for students.
	Addressing policy barriers	Does state policy address key barriers to WBL?		In 2019 the Legislature passed several bills to address policy barriers to WBL: • The Future Workforce Initiative aims to increase STEM training in K-12 schools in part to increase the number of teachers qualified to teach work-based learning • SB 1259 requires the Higher Education Commission (which administers WBL grants) to submit an annual report on participants in WBL • SB 805 incentivizes collaboration among higher education, K-12, and economic development partners for projects that use WBL or other approaches to address local workforce needs

Detail: Tennessee

Category	Criteria	Description	Rating	Explanation of state's rating
WBL funding	Financial incentives	Are there financial incentives (e.g., tax credits) for employers that offer WBL opportunities to high school students?		Tennessee taxpayers who employ an apprentice can receive a tax credit in an amount equal to \$2,000 or 10% of the wages earned by an apprentice, whichever is less. The law does not explicitly include or exclude youth apprenticeships (and, in TN, youth apprenticeships are directly tied to registered apprenticeships). This tax credit only applies to employers participating in apprenticeships, not other types of WBL.
	Dedicated federal funding	Does the state use its Perkins funding to support WBL?		Tennessee selected WBL participation as a program quality indicator in its Perkins V plan .
	Dedicated state funding	Is there a dedicated source of state funding for WBL?		Tennessee has two grant programs to support WBL: - The GIVE program is a competitive grant designed to foster long-term regional partnerships among community colleges, industry, economic development/ workforce agencies, and K-12 to identify and address local skills gaps - The WBL Demonstration Grant supports local efforts to develop summer “learn and earn” opportunities to increase youth employment and educational attainment
WBL support infrastructure	Statewide support infrastructure, intermediary, and/or public-private partnerships	Is there a system or organization designed to facilitate WBL opportunities and/or are there public-private partnerships that support access to paid or for-credit WBL opportunities for high school students?		The Tennessee Pathways initiative works to connect K-12, postsecondary, labor, economic and community development partners, and employers so students have a clear pathway through school and into the workforce. Members of the Tennessee Pathways team are embedded in all nine regions of Tennessee, providing intimate, direct support to partners as they develop initiatives and programs. Tennessee Pathways developed the Employer Engagement Assessment Tool (EEAT), which both holds data on existing employer engagement levels at regional and state levels, and has the ability to project the success of an employer partner in relation to other partners in the region.
	WBL communications infrastructure	Are there systems in place to communicate among schools, students, employers, and other stakeholders about WBL opportunities?		Tennessee's WBL guide places responsibility on coordinators for development of employer relationships and communication with students about opportunities. The implementation guide includes strategies for recruiting employers, such as creating a spreadsheet or database at the district level. In addition, TDOE shares a monthly WBL Coordinator Connection, which provides promising practice spotlights, WBL PD/training requirements, and classroom resources to a variety of stakeholders.

Detail: Tennessee

Category	Criteria	Description	Rating	Explanation of state's rating
WBL quality	Experience quality	Is there a statewide framework in place that defines quality expectations for WBL experiences and holds employers accountable to those expectations?		Tennessee's WBL policy guide provides a list of characteristics that define high-quality WBL experiences. Students are required to take an exit survey upon completion of a WBL course to share feedback on their experiences. While there is not currently a process in place to hold employers accountable for providing high-quality experiences, the Employer Engagement Assessment Tool (EEAT) developed by Tennessee Pathways may eventually be able to support schools in evaluating the quality of employer partners.
	Program quality	Is there a statewide framework in place that defines quality expectations for WBL programs and holds schools/districts accountable to those expectations?		Tennessee's WBL policy guide provides a list of structures and systems that high-quality programs provide. The WBL implementation guide requires districts to evaluate their WBL programs through surveying participating employers, school personnel, students, and other stakeholders. The TDOE provides sample evaluation frameworks to support districts to evaluate their programs and identify opportunities for continuous improvement. In order to be the teacher of record for a WBL course and oversee a WBL program, an educator must complete WBL Certification Training and be recertified every two years.
WBL accountability	Data collection	Is there a process in place to track student participation in WBL opportunities and their outcomes?		All WBL programs are required to share information about WBL student participation and outcomes in the WBL Student Placement Portal .
	Use of data to drive equity	Does the state disaggregate WBL data by student demographics and experience type?		Every quarter, a report of WBL student enrollment broken down by district and school is generated from the state's enrollment information system. These reports include a breakdown of student subgroups (race, economic status, students with disabilities, CTE concentrators) by district and school. The data do not currently include experience type.
	Use of data to drive quality	Does the state use disaggregated data as a component of its quality framework?		The state uses data in internal conversations about how to modify targeted WBL coordinator training and professional development. However, there is not currently a process in place to use data to inform program improvement.

Themes and Recommendations

04

Our analysis surfaced six themes across state WBL policies ...

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- 3 Very few states have developed explicit policies or programs to support high-need high school students and remove barriers to equitable access and success in work-based learning.
- 4 States commonly leverage federal funds focused on workforce supports to fund WBL, while a few states provide state funding and employer incentives specific to WBL.
- 5 Very few states do a good job communicating available WBL opportunities.

Our analysis surfaced six themes across state WBL policies ...

- 1 State approaches to high school WBL policies tend to fall into two broad buckets: centralized with the state or decentralized out to districts.
- 2 A majority of states have broad eligibility requirements for participation in work-based learning; however, very few states commit to ensuring that every student can access a variety of work-based learning experiences.
- 3 Very few states have developed explicit policies or programs to support high-need high school students and remove barriers to equitable access and success in work-based learning.
- 4 States commonly leverage federal funds focused on workforce supports to fund WBL, while a few states provide state funding and employer incentives specific to WBL.
- 5 Very few states do a good job communicating available WBL opportunities.
- 6 Many states have not yet set clear quality and accountability expectations or developed systems to collect and use data on high school work-based learning for program improvement.

... and pointed to key priorities for states seeking to strengthen WBL

States in the early stages of developing WBL policies and programs should ...	• Clearly define what WBL means, decide what quality looks like, and develop clear expectations • Develop guidelines that promote widespread access to WBL opportunities for all students • Develop explicit supports to ensure high-need student groups have equitable access to WBL • Develop explicit supports to ensure a diverse pool of employers have the ability to provide WBL • Ensure adequate funding for all parties involved — students, schools, and employers • Establish a strong communications infrastructure to share available opportunities
States that have WBL policies in place but aren't sure how well those policies are working for students should ...	• Ensure the state has a clear definition of quality and related expectations; revise as needed • Create a system to assess and track the quality measures developed • Ensure widespread and equitable access for all students, including high-need student groups • Develop the processes and structures to collect and disaggregate data on WBL programs • Ensure adequate funding for all parties involved — students, schools, and employers • Establish a strong communications infrastructure to share available opportunities
States that have strong quality standards and data collection processes in place should ...	• Ensure that data are being used for quality improvement • Ensure that program implementation is broad enough to allow widespread, equal access for students • Use data to identify gaps in implementation and barriers to access; revise policies as needed • Ensure adequate funding for all parties involved — students, schools, and employers • Develop or strengthen WBL coordinating infrastructure (e.g., intermediaries, public-private partnerships) • Establish a strong communications infrastructure to share available opportunities
States that have strong standards in place but don't have widespread access or participation should ...	• Use data to understand where there are gaps in access and participation and identify barriers • Ensure policies and funding streams encourage and incentivize universal access • Explore and pilot opportunities to adapt work-based learning to virtual environments to expand access • Establish a strong communications infrastructure to share available opportunities



Key Takeaways for TN

1. Ensure that program implementation is broad enough to allow widespread, equal access and equal opportunity for students
2. Develop explicit supports to ensure high-need student groups have equitable access to WBL
3. Develop explicit supports to ensure a diverse pool of employers can provide WBL
4. Ensure adequate funding for all parties involved — students, schools, and employers
5. Create a system to assess and track measures of quality and accountability
6. Strengthen the processes and structures to collect and disaggregate data on WBL programs
7. Ensure that data are being used for quality improvement
8. Continue to support and expand a WBL coordinating infrastructure
9. Establish a strong communications infrastructure to share available opportunities with all parties
10. Explore and pilot opportunities to adapt work-based learning to virtual environments to expand access



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