

Georgia State-Led Topical Conversation

Speaker: Dwayne Hobbs, Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE)

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Overview

Georgia believes work-based learning (WBL) is one of the best vehicles to teach students critical employability skills. WBL is part of Georgia's overall Strategic Plan, which emphasizes the expansion of career, technical, and agricultural education (CTAE) opportunities to teach employability skills. Approximately 20,000 students of 370,000 are in a WBL program statewide in Georgia. WBL is grouped into four classifications: youth apprenticeship, internship, cooperative education, and employability skill development. One third of WBL participants are in a **Youth Apprenticeship Program**.¹

History

WBL extends back to 1970, but The Youth Apprenticeship Law (1994) introduced state-funded grants (approximately \$3 million per year) to support the existence of **youth apprenticeship coordinators**² in schools. In 2006, reengineering of the WBL program included the creation of the schoolwide WBL coordinator model to serve students from all CTAE areas. This individual is responsible for aligning a student's career goals to a structured work experience or related coursework. The coordinators are guided by Georgia's WBL Coordinator Model, which can be found on page 89 of the WBL Manual. The WBL reengineering process involved three focus groups (North, Central, South) that represented all six of Georgia's state regions. These focus groups were composed of existing coordinators and administrators.

Georgia's WBL Manual and Standards

Georgia's WBL program has 24 standards, which are formally referred to as "Sections" within Georgia's WBL Manual. Each standard has a "standard statement," or an overarching definition of that standard.

Funding

In Georgia, a WBL program course is that in which students are enrolled for credit, and which the system is receiving funding. The same funding is received for a course in which students go off-site or if they stay in-class for a CTAE course. Funding for courses is divided into two types: D-weight courses are the average cost of a class and K-weight courses receive 18% more funding because they are more costly classes or experiences. K-weight classification depends on the costliness of materials required for implementing the course, such as a construction class that requires expensive machinery and tools.

¹ Georgia's Youth Apprenticeship Program is under the WBL program umbrella. However, it maintains its own separate identity within the program because it has its own funding stream.

² Georgia has about 400 WBL coordinators; approximately 140 of these coordinators are youth apprenticeship coordinators.

Professional Development

Educator professional development is the heart of Georgia's WBL program. Georgia invests a significant amount of time and funds in training, monitoring, and supporting WBL coordinators. There are approximately three region meetings for WBL personnel per year. These meetings must be held in a business location to emphasize coordination and building strong relationships with business stakeholders.

Data

Georgia collects data on its WBL program to track progress and identify trends for further development and growth through C-Net. This database holds information on individual WBL program employers and individual program students. There are two annual reports, one for the WBL program and one for the Youth Apprenticeship Program, that includes 170 data points and four narrative questions related to Georgia's 24 standards.

Challenges

The main challenge Georgia faces is the reluctance of employers to hire students younger than 18 years old, mainly due to misinformation about working regulations for underage employees. Georgia is working to address this problem through extensive communication efforts, including myth-busting documents, ongoing conversations, and educating employers. The Great Promise Partnerships, a nonprofit organization that works with businesses, is another resource Georgia utilizes to educate employers about working with some of Georgia's most at-risk youth.

Another challenge is there are fewer full-time WBL coordinators than part-time coordinators. The state is interested in increasing the number of full-time coordinators to ensure that all students receive the appropriate amount of time and attention for the WBL experiences.

Q&A With Dwayne Hobbs

QUESTION: Do the WBL coordinators teach the students in the WBL class?

ANSWER: WBL coordinators are not the teachers. A coordinator is expected to work with the CTAE teachers (e.g., the teacher of the construction class) to identify the students ready for participation in the program and to find employers to serve as placements. However, 40% of WBL coordinators work part-time, which means that they may also be teachers of specific CTAE programs in their other allotted time. However, being a teacher is not a requirement for WBL coordinators.

QUESTION: Does the state approve WBL programs at the district level?

ANSWER: No, we do not approve programs. Georgia State Board of Education's rules and standards dictate how schools administer their program. Perkins Compliance visits involve a review of the

WBL program courses. Attendance to meetings are monitored and WBL coordinators are expected to attend meetings and trainings. There is a lot of outreach so that coordinators and administrators know how to implement the WBL program. WBL courses are funded and administered just like any other state-approved course.

QUESTION: How many hours do the students spend daily in the WBL setting? Weekly?

ANSWER: The answer to how many hours students spend in the WBL setting varies by school and its designated schedule. The class schedule varies greatly by school, and it is impossible to regulate a specific amount of time that students must spend in the WBL setting. The rule is that a student must work as many hours on the job as they would have sat in class for the equivalent amount of credit.

QUESTION: Have there been any issues with disproportionate rates of participation by students (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity, geography). If so, how has Georgia addressed these opportunity gaps?

ANSWER: The diversity of the school generally reflects the breakdown of diversity seen within participation in that school's WBL program. Georgia's WBL program faces the same diversity issues as everywhere else. For example, certain job types have an imbalance in gender; women are less likely to participate in manufacturing experiences and men are less likely to participate in nursing experiences. It is challenging to encourage participation in nontraditional work experiences for certain genders.

QUESTION: For clarification, is there only one WBL coordinator per school, or does the number of coordinators vary depending on the student enrollment at the school? Do the coordinators work with students who have disabilities?

ANSWER: Coordinators have to be trained in special education and do have to work with students with disabilities. The number of coordinators is based on the number of students. The WBL program model shows the average number of students per coordinator, and this is the same workload as other CTAE classes (one coordinator for 28 students per period). Georgia is pushing as many coordinators as possible to be full-time coordinators. Many coordinators are overstaffed, and schools in these situations may pull in an additional coordinator depending on the load.

QUESTION: Has Georgia provided any funding streams to help with transportation costs? For example, does Georgia supply districts with funds to help transport students to or from WBL placements?

ANSWER: A few schools and worksites coordinate to provide students with transportation, but the majority of students across Georgia are required to provide their own transportation to and from work. Atlanta Public Schools is one example of a district that coordinates with public transportation to get students to their worksites.

QUESTION: Has including the College and Career Readiness Performance Indicator (CCRPI) in accountability elevated WBL? Was including this indicator controversial at all? If not, what did GaDOE do to smooth the adoption and inclusion?

ANSWER: Yes, yes, and yes. It was a little controversial at first. At the time it was originally created, there was a larger number of core individuals involved in creating the CCRPI estimate. We won the battle of being involved in the estimate. GaDOE determined in 2017 that the large increase in WBL student enrollment credit was due to the CCRPI; this shows the strength of CTAE director and support from superintendent. An extreme focus is balancing the quality and quantity of WBL. Three interlocking pieces must be in place to create quality.

QUESTION: Do the employers have any role in selecting which students they take on as learners? Or is it strictly handled by the school to place the students?

ANSWER: The coordinator must have a relationship with the employer. The WBL coordinator handles the application process for students. After the coordinator reviews these applications, they select students to then go to the job site for an interview with the employer. At this interview stage, the employer may select which students to fill their allotted number of available spots for the WBL program. A benefit to the employers is that there is a finite end to the student's employment dictated by the program, but the business may hire students outside the confines of the program at least one business day following the formal end of the student's participation in the program.

QUESTION: Is there a formalized expectation for the employers to provide feedback on individual students, or the experience in general?

ANSWER: The employer must comply with the student evaluation portion of the program. These evaluations will soon be online but are currently completed on paper. There are two employability skill evaluations (e.g., professional appearance, communication etc.) and two technical skills evaluations (e.g., skills specific to the medical industry, like drawing blood) each semester. The WBL coordinator helps roll these into formal feedback via the grade a student gets for the course.

QUESTION: When working with students with disabilities, what is the role and responsibility of the WBL coordinator versus the transition coordinator? Do they collaborate?

ANSWER: The WBL coordinator becomes like any CTAE teacher in this case. The special education teacher is responsible for creating the plan for that individual student and then meets with the CTAE teacher to come up with any barriers and accommodations for that student. It's a coordination effort as it would be in any other case.

QUESTION: What are the barriers for moving the part-time coordinators to full-time employees?

ANSWER: Funding. It takes roughly 100 students earning a unit of credit each to draw the state full-time employee funding needed to justify a full coordinator's salary on the standard teacher pay scale. If, for example, a smaller rural system only has 40–50 students in a WBL program, only a half position is justified, and combining it with another half position of teaching makes sense. Some communities do not have enough business and industry to place larger numbers of WBL students, so that becomes the limitation. Some systems locally supplement to make a full position exist with less than a full load. A salary supplement to issue to local systems or business contributions can also help solve this problem.

QUESTION: Who is responsible for entering the data in C-Net? Is that something the WBL coordinators do for each school?

ANSWER: Yes, each WBL coordinator has an account in C-Net where they manage all their student files.

QUESTION: Have most of the WBL students already completed CTE courses or programs, prior to the WBL experience? Or is this a program for ALL students?

ANSWER: With the model of matching (1) defined career goal, (2) related coursework, and (3) related job experience in order to fit the definition of WBL [for Georgia] the students must have completed courses. The state minimum is that one of the three pathway courses must have been completed prior to placement. A few systems have superseded that with a requirement to complete all three pathway courses first. There are some pathway options outside CTAE in advanced academic areas, foreign language, and fine arts.

QUESTION: Where are the regional WBL meetings advertised?

ANSWER: The region meetings are posted on the [GaDOE WBL website](#). E-mail communications are also sent. Administrators and counselors are invited on occasion. Each region chair has an e--mail group of the coordinators in their region. There is also an e-mail function for all defined groups on our [CTAE Resource Network website](#).