

Learning From the Field: WBL Practices From States

A one-size-fits-all model does not exist for implementing quality work-based learning (WBL) opportunities for students. Often contextual factors, including existing programs, business relationships, state and local policies, and staff preparedness, play a critical role in the success of WBL programs. To address the varied and common needs related to WBL, the College and Career Readiness and Success Center (CCRS Center) launched State-Led Topical Conversations to facilitate cross-state sharing of emerging WBL practices. In addition, by working to ensure that the topics addressed in these conversations were selected by members and spoke to their interests, the conversations provided members with a forum to explore new ideas and practices.

State-Led Topical Conversations are short presentations focused on specific WBL topics that have been identified by state participants. The presentations provide an overview of content and then offer ample time for discussion among state peers. These intimate and focused conversations allow states to not only share their strategies but also solicit feedback from their peers.

State participants identified several critical topics for discussion:

- Establishing WBL standards
- Collecting data to measure WBL
- Expanding WBL for students with disabilities
- Incorporating WBL as part of a student's personalized learning plan

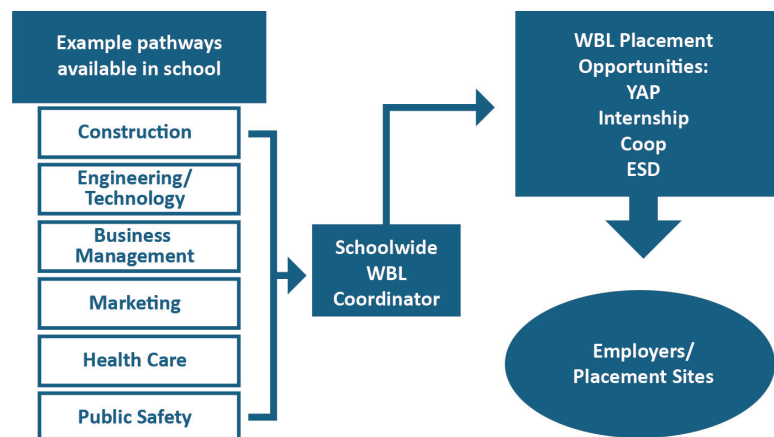
The following sections describe the main takeaways from those discussions and links to additional resources on those topics that were created by the CCRS Center.



GEORGIA Establishing WBL Standards

For the inaugural conversation, state participants expressed interest in learning more about how standards could be used to monitor WBL implementation and ensure program quality. Georgia believes that WBL is one of the best vehicles for teaching students critical employability skills and is an important part of Georgia's career, technical, and agricultural education (CTAE) [strategic plan](#), which emphasizes the expansion of CTAE opportunities to teach employability skills.

Figure 1. Georgia's WBL Structure



Georgia's presentation highlighted the holistic approach the state had taken to implementing its WBL standards. The state's standards are only one way in which the state is standardizing and monitoring WBL; in fact, the training of coordinators and their ongoing professional development allows the state to monitor the quality of their programming.

- **Establish Common WBL Standards:** [Georgia's WBL Manual](#) includes 24 standards to guide all aspects of the WBL education experience.
- **Create a WBL Coordinator Role:** WBL coordinators play an integral role in helping students participate in placement opportunities. In 2006, the reengineering of the WBL program included the creation of a 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.
- **Monitor WBL Quality:** Georgia's standards require that complete and accurate records related to enrollment, assessment, and awarding of credit be maintained for each WBL student. Two annual reports, one for the WBL program and one for the Youth Apprenticeship Program, include 170 data points and four narrative questions related to Georgia's 24 standards.
- **Provide Ongoing Professional Development:** Georgia invests a significant amount of time and funds in training, monitoring, and supporting WBL coordinators. Approximately three regional meetings for WBL personnel are held per year.



RELATED CCRS RESOURCE

[Work-Based Learning Definitions: Themes From States and National Organizations](#): WBL does not have a universally accepted definition; however, a strong definition can help ensure that students participate in high-quality WBL experiences. This resource includes WBL definitions from state education agencies, departments of labor or workforce development, and national organizations and discusses common themes across the definitions.



RHODE ISLAND

Rhode Island's DataHUB and Public Dashboard

States expressed interest in learning how data from disparate sources could be used to bolster WBL efforts. States reported that WBL programs often reflected local trends, but it often was more difficult to discern the wider changes across industries and how WBL programs could be aligned to reflect those changes. Rhode Island's work to understand these larger trends is possible through [DataSpark](#), which houses Rhode Island's DataHUB, the state longitudinal data system (SLDS). The DataHUB includes data sets from state agencies in education, civic engagement, health and human services, and the economy that allows users to work on issues that require cross-sectional approaches and data.

Figure 2. Topics of Interest on Rhode Island's DataHUB



Economy



Health



Education



Justice

DataSpark's presentation highlighted the role that data and collaboration have on setting goals and working to address issues that benefit from the involvement of multiple stakeholders. For example, initiatives such as WBL can benefit from not only looking at data showing learning outcomes for students who participated in WBL but also using labor data to show their earnings after graduation to measure impact and return on investment.

- **Exploring Cross-Sectional Data:** The Rhode Island DataHUB allows users to view information and data from PK–12, higher education, job training, and workforce data sources. The website provides users with data reports that summarize trends across specific data sets and gives users access to the data catalog, which lists the variables and descriptions contained in those data sets. For example, DataSpark used data provided by the Rhode Island Department of Education and the Rhode Island Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner to explore and create a report on the relationship between higher rates of high school absenteeism and low college persistence.
- **Making Data Actionable:** The Rhode Island DataHUB has compiled data stories that focus on a specific issue or policy affecting Rhode Island. DataSpark's dashboard is intended to be open and useful to the public as well as state agencies, specifically for reporting purposes. The dashboard is intended to build capacity among agencies and ensure that they are relying on data and metrics to guide their work.
- **Interagency Partnerships:** To ensure that reports and stories are meaningful, analyses are aligned with community and agency interests. Research is funded by grants or at the request of state agencies or community organizations. DataSpark and stakeholders work to focus on the type of data needed to answer critical questions and ensure alignment between findings and practice.



[Video](#)

RELATED CCRS RESOURCE

[Harnessing the Potential of Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems to Support College and Career Readiness](#): SLDSs offer states a potentially powerful tool to observe trends, assess needs, and develop and refine policies that can promote college and career readiness initiatives aligned with the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This brief discusses strategies for leveraging SLDS to promote state-defined college and career readiness goals.



ILLINOIS

Expanding College and Career Readiness for Students With Disabilities

States expanding WBL opportunities, particularly for populations of students that have generally not participated in WBL is a common commitment across states. For this conversation, states were interested in how their peers were ensuring that students with disabilities were offered quality WBL opportunities. Illinois shared its approach, which involves the implementation of [EnvisionIT \(EIT\)](#), a college and career readiness curriculum that offers free and flexible blended and digital learning courses. It supports students with disabilities, individualized education programs, individualized service plans, student success plans, and individualized plans for employment, and it is accessible for students with Grades 6–12 reading levels.

Figure 3. EIT’s Core Components



Illinois’s implementation of EIT is part of the state’s goal in providing students with comprehensive opportunities for career exploration and growth. This goal means not only giving students choice with how to plan for their careers or next steps but also ensuring that the curriculum is responsive to student needs and interests.

- **Customizing the Student Experience:** As an interactive curriculum, EIT has 12 customizable units that prepare students to either continue their education by attending college or directly enter employment or the military. This curriculum allows students to explore all available options and exposes them to different avenues that they can pursue after graduating.
- **Preparing Students for Postsecondary Goals:** Students develop a transition portfolio, which includes self-assessment results of student interests, a list of career choices that match interests, student-articulated career goals, sample job and college applications, and other key documents.
- **Alignment with IDEA, WIOA, and ESSA:** The curriculum is aligned with legislation, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), and the ESSA, which helps streamline supports that students can take advantage of and further encourage their growth.



Video

RELATED CCRS RESOURCE

[*How ESSA and IDEA Can Support College and Career Readiness for Students With Disabilities*](#): This brief explores how states can leverage ESSA and the IDEA to promote college and career readiness for students with disabilities through high expectations and access to the general curriculum, a well-rounded education, career pathways and transition planning, personalized and competency-based learning, subgroup accountability, and alignment across policies and programs.



VERMONT Work-Based Learning as Part of Students' Personalized Learning Plans

For our final conversation, states demonstrated interest in learning about how peers were working to ensure that their WBL programs reflected student interests and could be better incorporated within their academic paths. In July 2013, the Vermont General Assembly enacted Act 77, the Flexible Pathways Initiative. Act 77 requires that students engage in a Personalized Learning Plan (PLP) process and have access to Flexible Pathway opportunities. The Vermont Agency of Education embedded Act 77 into the state's Education Quality Standards, which require that schools implement proficiency-based learning systems that align graduation requirements with the Vermont State Board of Education's adopted standards. The implementation of proficiency-based learning systems allows for Flexible Pathway opportunities to be valuable for students. Students receive credit for participating in opportunities related to potential academic and career interests, thus attaining transferable skills necessary for postsecondary success.

Figure 4. Resources From Vermont's Website on Flexible Pathways



What are Flexible Pathways?



What is Act 77?



What is Personalized Learning?

Vermont's presentation highlighted the challenges and opportunities that come with creating systems to ensure that students not only have access to personalized learning experiences but also sustain quality and fidelity of implementation. In addition, the presentation also provided insight on how industries can serve as thought partners to help with the implementation of these programs.

- **Facilitate Industry and School Collaboration:** Vermont established a [WBL Collaborative](#) to help employers and other organizations provide WBL opportunities with a space to network and build relationships. The WBL Collaborative also is working with the Vermont State Colleges System to translate WBL experience into transcripts and acknowledge students' participation when applying to colleges.

- **Focus on Equity:** Vermont's [personalized learning equity crosswalk](#) explores what accessibility to PLP processes for all students looks like. Vermont has strongly emphasized that no matter how the system is set up within each district and school, the PLP process is one that all students should engage in.
- **Ensure PLP Consistency:** Vermont is creating PLP exemplars that will be available statewide. The hope is to get districts and schools on the same page and provide quality and streamlined guidance. Vermont has more work to do but hopes to begin collecting data on personalized learning with a school climate survey. Until hard data are collected, conversations about best practices to support the transferability of PLPs and implement the common elements of PLPs will continue.



[Video](#)

RELATED CCRS RESOURCE

[Career Pathways Initiatives](#): What should states interested in career pathways consider in choosing from current models? This brief highlights national and regional career pathways initiatives and provides lessons learned for states that are developing and implementing a career pathways system.

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