April 2025

Collaborative Partner News

The Work-based Learning Collaborative includes 30 partner organizations that cover the gamut of work-based learning from the student, employer, and educator perspectives, as well as direct-service, capacity, and policy levels. We are proud to share highlights of our WBLC partners - state agencies, industry associations, colleges, high schools, and nonprofit organizations.

Find the list of the WBLC members **here**!

WBLC Data Dashboard - Youth Voice Updates

The Work-based Learning Collaborative is excited that we have another year of data to share! Over the past four years, WBLC has hosted focus groups with almost 650 high school youth and we share their insights publicly on the Data Dashboard. On the Dashboard, you can also find information about career-connected learning (including work-based learning) programs across Montana; data on K-12 educator perspective; data on employer experience with work-based learning; employer satisfaction regarding recruitment, readiness, and retention for entry-level employees; and more!

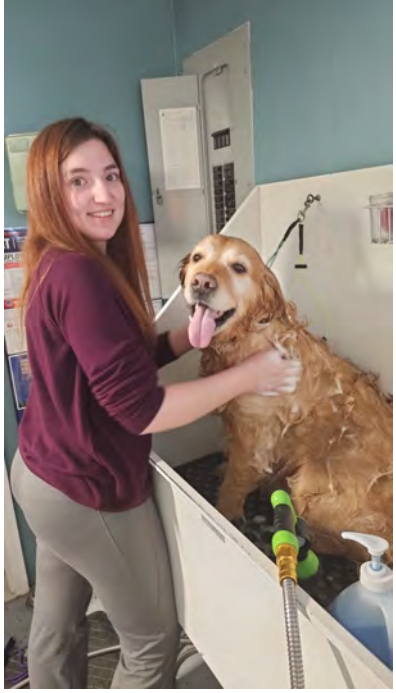
The **WBLC Data Dashboard** is intended to inform the work of the Collaborative as well as program builders and decision makers across Montana. In addition to sharing WBL data, the dashboard allows users to crosswalk data from various sources for easier comparison and analysis. Sources of data include the Work-based Learning Collaborative, Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Public Instruction, and Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

Questions? Reach out to Ian Beagles, WBLC Data Analyst.

Pre-ETS Student Receiving Youth Achievement Award

In April, Anjle will be honored with the DPHHS Youth Achievement Award, an award that goes to foster or adoptive youths who exhibit a drive to be successful and make positive changes in their lives. Anjle has been working with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) through the Disability Employment and Transitions Division (DETD) of DPHHS.

During her journey, Anjle participated in a hands-on work experience with a dog groomer, gaining valuable skills and insight into the world of dog grooming and small business ownership. Through the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services, Anjle received essential resources, including grooming supplies and training courses. After gaining experience, Anjle was offered a registered apprenticeship position.



She also had the opportunity to explore new areas of interest and discovered a passion for the medical field. Thanks to the guidance and support of her Pre-ETS Specialist, Anjle conducted an informational interview with a Labor and Delivery Nurse, which helped solidify her decision to pursue a nursing degree. She plans to start her studies in the fall of 2025.

Anjle's journey exemplifies resilience and the power of support in shaping a brighter future. Her story is a testament to the importance of connecting foster youth with opportunities, the impact of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the opportunities presented through nurturing young talents as they explore their career paths. We look forward to seeing where her journey takes her next!

Helena College Offers New Firefighter Program

Helena College will host its first Firefighter 1 Academy course this spring taught by a fire and emergency services instructor. "The Helena College Fire and Emergency Services Program is highly committed to industry workforce development. We pride ourselves on providing individuals interested in this career path with a robust set of entry level skills and accredited certifications," says the Helena College website.

The intensive two-week training program will satisfy the hands-on performance requirements set by the National Fire Protection Association. Some of the skill sets prospective students will be trained and tested in are radio communication, fire attack, forcible entry, ropes and knots, basic pump operations, hazardous materials response and more. Classes run May 12 through May 23.

Montana to Launch Statewide Credential and Skills Registry to Strengthen the Connection Between Education and Workforce

A new statewide credential registry will make Montana's educational credentials, skills, and career pathways more transparent and accessible to students, workers, and employers across the state. The Montana Credential Registry will be a centralized platform that powers user-friendly, online tools where Montanans can explore and understand the full spectrum of educational and professional credentials available in the state, including degrees, non-credit programs, and short-term training opportunities.

The Montana Credential Registry will transform basic credential listings into actionable information by integrating detailed job skills and labor market data. Learners can discover which credentials exist, where to obtain them, and how they stack together to create career advancement opportunities. Employers will gain access to useful skills data and clear information about credential value. The first phase of the credential registry will be accessible in mid-2025.

Carroll College Engages Middle Schools in Career-Connected Learning

It is never too early for kids to start thinking about college, careers, and other plans. In March around three hundred eighth-grade students from CR Anderson Middle School rotated through different academic-themed stations in civil engineering, chemistry and nursing to help students find their areas of interest. and college classes at Carroll College.

Erik Rose, the associate vice president of enrollment at Carroll says, "College and career exploration is very very important because it gets students to start thinking about what types of occupations they would like to be in, what they would like to study, and it helps them really balance their high school experience." The goal of these visits is to build early awareness of Carroll and spark interest in attending college following high school. Raiden Williams, a CR Anderson students says, "I feel like it is important just so you know what to expect after high school and in adult life."

Follow us on social media

We are hiring an AmeriCorps VISTA

Responsibilities will include:

- Developing communication resources for members (social media, marketing)
- Program resources to build capacity for programs facilitating
- Offering work-based learning experiences
- Non-profit administration

Apply Here

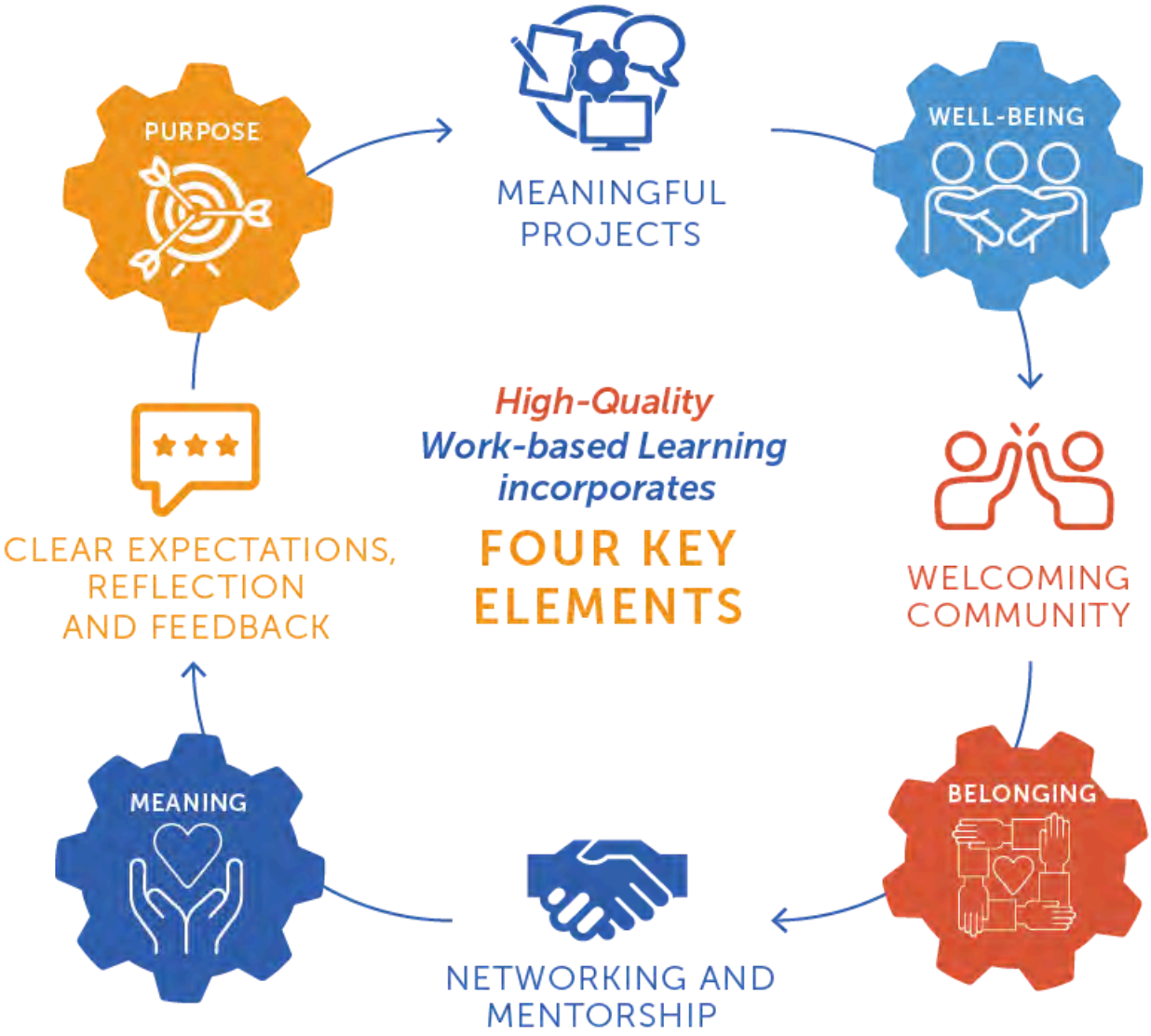
KNOWLEDGE NUGGET

Work in Progress Podcast

In this episode of Work in Progress, Jane Swift, president of Education of Work, discusses the importance of work-based learning in preparing college students for careers. Work-based learning has been shown to help students, many of whom are from underrepresented backgrounds, develop the skills and experience needed to secure good first jobs after graduation.

High Quality Work-based Learning

High-quality work-based learning experiences include meaningful projects, a welcoming community, mentoring, and feedback (jff.org). At the same time, four key principles that help youth and young adults thrive and lead healthy lives are: **belonging, meaning, wellbeing, and purpose** (aspencommunitysolutions.org). The strategies that make a work-based learning experience impactful also lead to broader positive outcomes for youth.



Whether one major project or several smaller projects, when employers engage students in meaningful work that is based in real-life challenges, young people contribute to problem solving, tangible products, and outcomes. This helps **learners feel a true sense of purpose** in their WBL experience.

When employers create welcoming environments and build community among student workers and staff with strong onboarding, points of connection, and celebration, **learners feel a sense of belonging.**

When learners have networking opportunities to explore careers and grow their professional networks, as well as mentors who can help them navigate the workplace, **learners process their WBL experiences, which supports their career development.**

When student workers are provided with clear expectations about performance and workplace standards, are engaged in regular goal setting, regularly reflect on their experience, and receive frequent, constructive feedback that helps them stay on-track, **learners deepen their understanding and make meaning of their WBL experiences.**

News You Can Use

Teens Record a Videocast: Miles City, MT

24 seniors in the Advanced English class at Custer County District High School are producing a student-run, community videocast called Ad Pod (Ad is short for Advisory, the first class period each day. It will air weekly on closed circuit TV, focusing on school and district announcements, sports, club information, and fun segments like "student in the hall" interviews and anonymous shout-outs to anyone they are grateful for. Follow along "behind the scenes" on Instagram @adpodatccdhs

MSU Reaches $22.5 million Fundraising Goal for First-ever On-campus Gallatin College MSU building

Not Your Parents' CTE: How Career and Technical Education Is Evolving

Increasingly, forward-thinking school districts are redefining CTE to expose students to a broad range of potential careers without necessarily steering them to a specific post-high school pathway.

Career-Connected Learning: Preparing Students for a Dynamic Future

Whether young people engage in client-focused opportunities, internships, or endure academically challenging coursework, career-connected learning is an environment to cultivate a sense of self-awareness, determination, and direction, essential for their success in both education and life.

Education in Governors' 2025 State of the State Addresses

FutureEd analyzed speeches from 41 governors to identify states' pre-K to higher ed education agendas for the coming year, highlighting common themes, bipartisan commitments and partisan divides.

The Importance of Competency-Based Education and the Mentor Mindset for Equity

Yeager's research underlines the importance of adopting a mentor mindset when engaging with students – an approach that centers on validating their perspectives, maintaining transparency, and upholding high standards.

Ranking 4,600 Colleges by ROI (2025)

Using new data from the College Scorecard, they ranked 4,600 colleges and universities by return on investment. This data tool includes the ROI across multiple years, allowing for comparisons by institution across years, as well as comparisons by type of degrees in individual years.

In A Surprise, U.S. Colleges Saw Higher Enrollment Last Fall

Cost Is One Thing—Value Is Another: Opinion

A shift to skills-based hiring is a good development, but don't be fooled—the advantage for college-educated workers will continue to grow, Jamie Merisotis writes.

The Science Behind Dramatically Better Conversations

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or visit wblmt.org.

Work That Matters

Work-based learning (WBL) opportunities span a continuum from workplace tours to apprenticeships (and many models in between).

In addition to building employability skills, WBL experiences help students develop **meaning** from their classroom learning and explore **purposeful** career opportunities. Employers who intentionally cultivate **belonging** in the workplace for young workers can gain access to future workforce talent. The Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative works to promote belonging, meaning, well-being, and purpose for all young Montanans by building capacity for high-quality WBL experiences.

There are components of work-based learning in the K-12 education system, the postsecondary education system, and the public workforce system – but no single entry point for students or employers to access them. Our work to improve coordination among agencies and WBL partners benefits Montana's emerging workforce and Montana's businesses.

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