

Newsletter - July 2024

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.

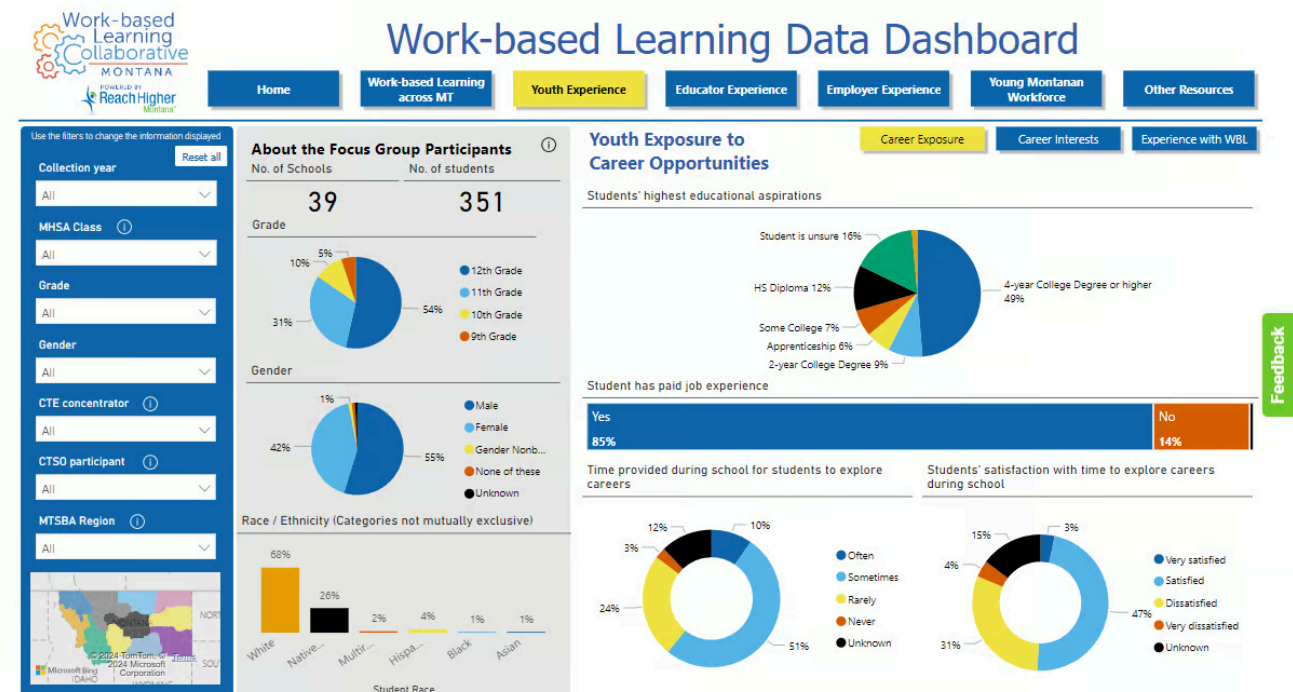


Work-based Learning Data Dashboard Launched!

After months of work, the Work-based Learning Collaborative is proud to announce the [WBL Data Dashboard is live!](#) The new Data Dashboard maps work-based learning programs across Montana; shares youth perspective on exposure to and experience with work-based learning and career exploration programs; shares data on employer experience with work-based learning and employer satisfaction regarding recruitment, readiness, and retention for entry-level employees; and more! To help achieve our mission of improving and expanding work-based learning in Montana, we wanted to make data on work-based learning in Montana available and accessible without being duplicative. View it [here](#).

This 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 also 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: ibeagles@reachhighermontana.org



Yellowstone County Summer Jobs Program Grows in Third Year

AJAY MT's [Summer Jobs Program \(SJP\)](#) builds employability skills, supports career exploration, and strengthens the local workforce pipeline. SJP offers students a paid summer work experience, provides paid pre-summer work skills training, and connects them with adult volunteer mentors. AJAY MT supports four regions of Montana implementing the Summer Jobs Program: Helena, Billings/Yellowstone County, Anaconda, and Bozeman.

The Yellowstone County Summer Jobs Program (YCSJP) is in its third year of this youth workforce development program. YCSJP saw great growth this year! The program interviewed and conducted work skills training to 34 Yellowstone County students, 32 students are working with an adult mentor through the program, and 27 students from the program are currently working for local employers. "We are thankful to the employers and adult mentors participating in this program that have helped make it a success," says Big Sky Economic Development (BSED). BSED leads the SJP with a committee of partners from the Billings Chamber of Commerce, Billings Public Schools - SD2, the Office of Public Instruction and Reach Higher Montana.



Nursing Apprenticeship Fulfilled a Calling

Abby Penninger was able to achieve her dream of becoming a geriatric nurse in her hometown of Billings, Montana thanks to the The St. John's United's nursing apprenticeship. The apprenticeship was supported by Reach Higher Montana, the backbone organization of the Work-based Learning Collaborative. Read Abby's story [here](#).

Discover Your Path: Montana Tech Careers Education Guide Now Available

Check out the free Montana tech career pathways resource guide by Montana High Tech Business Alliance, a member of WBLC. It features tech training programs ranging from short-term boot camps and certificates to 2-



year programs and 4-year or advanced degrees to help you gain skills for in-demand Montana tech jobs.

[Discover Montana tech education and rapid training programs near you](#), helpful online resources for upskilling, and detailed career pathways in computer science & IT, STEM, business management & finance, entrepreneurship, sales & marketing, media arts & communications, design & construction, and manufacturing.

Concept of the Month

What is Collective Impact?

The Montana Work-Based Learning Collaborative is working to improve and maximize the work-based learning systems in Montana to ensure all young adults have multiple pathways to economic mobility and that our workforce pipeline is robust. The Collaborative comprises 30 different organizations from multiple sectors across the state. Large-scale social change does not come from individual organizations, but rather from intentional and effective cross-sector coordination. This is Collective Impact.



“Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But collective impact initiatives are distinctly different,” writes the Stanford Social Innovation Review (SSIR).

“[SSIR research](#) shows that successful collective impact initiatives typically have five conditions that together produce true alignment and lead to powerful results: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and backbone support organizations”.

Reach Higher Montana is proud to be the backbone support organization of the WBLC, and is deeply grateful for the dedication, efforts, and partnership of the Collaborative members.



News You Can Use

Building Bridges Between Education and Industry: Youth Work-Based Learning as Talent Development Strategy

A new report from American Student Assistance surveyed businesses on their desire to build work-based learning opportunities with youth under the age of 18. While one-third of businesses interviewed said they were somewhat or very likely to do so, over a quarter said it was very unlikely.

Meaning And Purpose Matter

A college student’s choice of major affects the earnings graduates can expect depending on their course of study and the schools they attended, but meaning and purpose still should matter as a reason for pursuing higher education.

What A Difference Work-Based Learning Can Make

“Learning by working is essential to successfully connecting education to a career.

The data tell a compelling story: Undergraduates who complete a paid internship have higher-paying jobs after graduation. “Building Better Internships” looks at data from the National Survey of College Internships, administered by the University of Wisconsin in partnership with Strada. It examines the reasons students seek internships, common barriers they face in securing them, and how their experiences connect to career goals.”

Unsure about a career? Try one, in a job simulation program

“Students can use virtual job simulation to explore career options and prepare themselves for the workforce. While job simulations aren’t a replacement for internships, they can help begin to level the playing field for students who don’t have access to internships and other such opportunities.”

Blending Dual Enrollment and Work-Based Learning

[This toolkit](#) can help you convert your dual enrollment courses into dual enrollment work-based courses.

JFF and the Tennessee Department of Education are supporting twelve high school, college, and employer partnerships that are creating [dual enrollment work-based courses](#), a novel strategy that complements the state’s vision of innovative school models. These courses are taught through applied learning that uses the workplace as a “learning lab,” enabling students to simultaneously experience college-level courses, gain credit, and practice workplace skills that prepare them for STEM and computer science programs and careers. Instructors and employers co-plan and co-teach course content, which creates a seamless learning environment between the classroom and the workplace.

Why should donors invest in career education programs?

“Career education programs foster young people’s capacity to aspire, create, and navigate the pathways that make a reality of their ambitions. They also help young people develop an occupational identity and vocational self, which gives them a better sense of their values and abilities. On a practical level, they create faster and cheaper pathways to jobs and careers. Finally, they foster local civic engagement from employers and other community partners.

Here’s a career education framework spanning early childhood to high school that donors can use to guide their financial support for these programs.”



Questions? Contact:
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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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