

Monthly Newsletter - December 2023



New staff - WBL director and WBL data analyst

It's official...we have two new staff joining RHM to support the Montana Work-based Learning Collaborative! **Gabrielle Eklund Rowley** (Gabe) is our new WBL Collaborative Director, and **Ian Beagles** is our new WBL Data Analyst. Both Gabe and Ian will start on January 2, and will work in the Helena office. These positions are funded through 2024 by a grant from the Arthur M. Blank Family Foundation. We are grateful for their continued support and belief in our collective work!

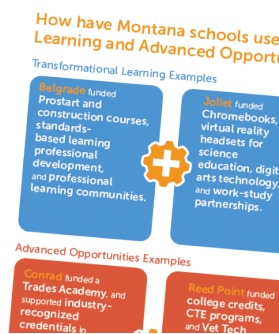


Gabe may be familiar to many of you, as she has been an active member of the WBL Collaborative and a strong partner with RHM. She comes to us from American Jobs for America's Youth - MT (AJAY), where she led the organization and the Summer Jobs Program. Before AJAY, she worked for GEARUP Wyoming. She is also a certified trainer for Ruby Payne's Framework for Understanding Poverty. Gabe holds a Master's degree in public administration, nonprofit administration, from the University of Montana. Gabe can be reached at 406-422-6809 or growley@reachhighermontana.org

Ian comes to us from the Office of Public Instruction, where he currently serves as the data control specialist for Career Technical and Adult Education. In addition to knowing OPI's data, he has had some experience working with the data folks in higher ed. Ian is a graduate of Northern Arizona University, where he was an intern in the NASA Space Grant program. Ian also studied astrophysics at The University of Toledo. Ian can be reached at 406-431-1436 or ibeagles@reachhighermontana.org

We are in the news!

The Collaborative's Advocacy and Policy Workgroup penned an Op Ed on Transformational Learning and Advanced Opportunities Grants that was picked up by several Montana newspapers. Many thanks to Ron Slinger, Miles Community College President and Workgroup member for being the star power on this piece. You can read it here: <https://missoulacurrent.com/viewpoint-learning/>



Activating Apprenticeship at Community Colleges

Sandy Bauman, Dean/CEO of Helena College, and Jason Butcher, Reach Higher Montana Outreach Director, traveled to Charleston, SC, in November to attend *Activating Apprenticeship at Community Colleges*, hosted by Trident Technical College and the Partnership to Advance Youth Apprenticeship (PAYA). Sandy and Jason both found the convening to be informative and inspiring, and Sandy summarized her key takeaways from the event:

1. **"Stop trying to create square pegs to fit round holes.** If you don't have a need you are filling, don't do it!" While that seems like common sense, I thought the message of this panelist was excellent advice as we consider what an apprenticeship program could look like for our community and our employers. Not every community has the same needs so we need to build appropriately.

2. **"Stop chasing money."** Don't come up with a project to fit a funding source. Come up with your project and then look for money." Again, maybe common sense, but the panelists emphasized how often this happens and if we want a successful projects, we need to think about the needs first.
3. **Scalability in an apprenticeship program almost always involves an industry-sector approach.** Connecting with employers is key to determining what are the common needs when building a program. Trying to customize for each employer is not sustainable. Think about needs that transcend industries as well. All industries have IT needs, business and HR needs, etc.
4. **An apprenticeship intermediary serves several important roles:**
 1. Serving as a liaison between the employers, the apprentices, and the related instruction
 2. Ensuring funding
 3. Collecting and sharing data
5. **Specifically for the youth apprenticeship program, it is important to continue to educate K12 leaders and parents about the value of work-based learning and apprenticeships!** There is still resistance, but the data show the important impact of these programs.
6. **To have a youth apprenticeship program, it is important to keep in mind that the students need a lot of support.** The intermediary entity needs to provide advising and encouragement, and help them understand workplace expectations.

ACTE CareerTech VISION Conference

Montana was well represented at the ACTE CareerTech VISION conference held in Phoenix, AZ, in early December. Reach Higher Montana sent its six-member outreach team to the event, along with Montana educators Adele Stenson from Wibaux and Solveig Munson from Bigfork. We asked the outreach team what they took away from the event, and here's what they had to say:

- **Jason Butcher, Outreach Director:** "The opening and closing sessions were very good with great messages about being passionate about what you do and being a good person."
- **Beth Petro, Eastern Montana:** "CTE is no longer seen as 'alternative education' and is really becoming the star. There is such a huge demand for CTE careers and I'm hopeful I can help advise my schools that are either already using work-based learning or eager to start the process."
- **Mike Lincoln, Northwest Montana:** "Some of my takeaways from the conference were that I was surprised at how much and how organized some states seem to be in their WBL programs in their states. The programs are thriving and many students are benefiting from what they have to offer. In many of the sessions though it was easy to see why the programs were thriving. They were in larger communities, many larger than any community we have in Montana. So it makes sense that cities like Billings and Kalispell can begin to get these programs started. It felt like we in Montana are behind in the WBL push when hearing from other states. I see that we have a huge challenge to somehow bring WBL to our smaller communities where nearly half of our students reside."
- **Jodi Heard, Southwest Montana:** "Hope is an additional takeaway I left the conference with. This concept focuses on employability skills and how they are not the same for all students. Equal is not always fair. Opportunity youth are the ones most in need of employment. Due to circumstances, often beyond their control, they do not get hired or are not able to stay employed. This idea promotes educators going above and beyond to help these students break barriers down. Additional educational opportunities need to be made available for this sector of students. Transportation, cleanliness, appropriate work environment behaviors, relief of additional responsibilities, such as child care, are obstacles that opportunity youth need to navigate beyond the basic soft (professional) skills."
- **Andy Begger, South Central Montana:** While Work Based Learning is not a new concept it was very interesting how we all experience the same difficulties: time, travel and relationship building. One of the most interesting ideas of



getting schools and communities to engage in Work Based Learning comes from Wisconsin where they have a CTE Incentive Grant. Their legislature will pay the school \$2,000 for each student that graduates with some sort of workforce or career-based credential. The two principals presenting stated that they spend a great amount of their time following through and helping students get certified because of this grant."

There is always much to learn on the work-based learning journey! If you've attended a work-based learning conference that provided you with inspiration or aspiration, we'd love to highlight your experiences in a future newsletter. Send us a brief paragraph about where you went and what you learned!

Questions:

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