



FutureReadyTN

WHERE EDUCATION MEETS OPPORTUNITY

Work-Based Learning (WBL): Intentionally Accelerating Students' Careers

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Agenda

- Connections between WBL and the department's four pillars
- Overview of WBL
- Types of WBL experiences
- WBL successes
- Challenges with scaling WBL
- Advancement initiatives for WBL
- Questions



Connections Between WBL and the Four Pillars



Credentials of Value

High-quality WBL placements often result in students earning the most impactful credentials of value, including: Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA), AWS Welding, OSHA 30, and NCCER, among others.



Individualized Advising

WBL students receive far more individualized advisement than their contemporaries. Beyond school counselors and career coaches, WBL students receive targeted mentorship and guidance from workplace supervisors, mentors, and WBL Coordinators.



Seamless Transitions

Through immersive WBL experiences, students better understand the academic and technical training needed for career advancement, leading to more seamless transitions to postsecondary, workforce, or the military.



Work-Based Learning (WBL):

WBL students gain hands-on work experience and receive guidance on the most critical dispositional skills needed to succeed in the future workforce.



WBL Overview: What is WBL?

- The [Strengthening Career and Technical Education in the 21st Century Act](#) defines WBL as ***sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.***
- [T.C.A. § 49-11-901](#) defines WBL as ***the application of academic and technical knowledge in a work setting that involves actual work experience.***
 - This is a continuum of activities that occur as early as pre-kindergarten and may continue beyond high school graduation.



The Continuum of WBL Experiences

- The [WBL Implementation Guide](#) specifies four specific components of a *WBL continuum*, which include:
 - Career Awareness
 - Career Exploration
 - Career Preparation
 - Career Training



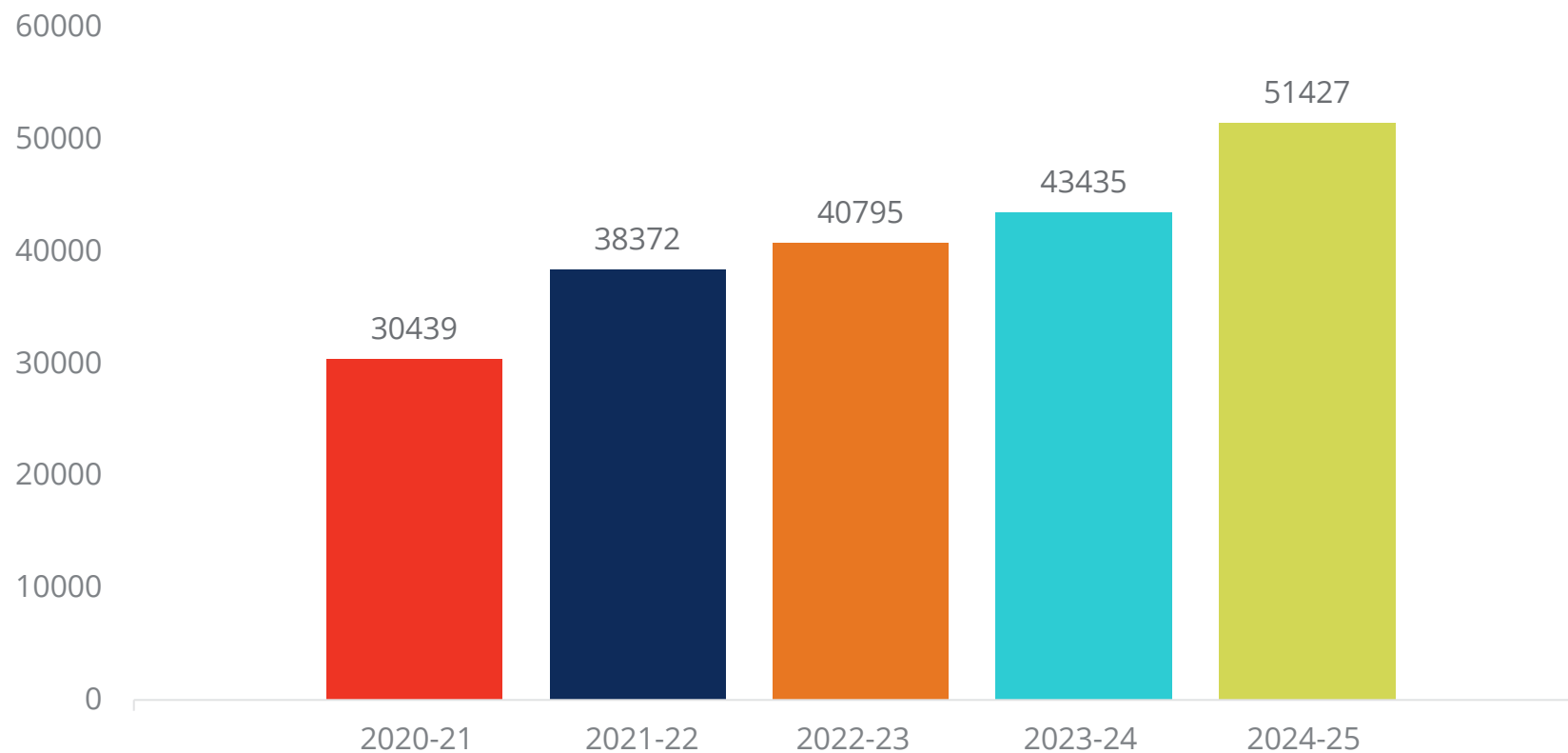
How Are Students Utilizing WBL?

- While WBL experiences occur throughout elementary, middle, and high school, WBL participation is currently measured by enrollment in courses that have standards and requirements aligned to the Federal and State definitions of WBL.
- WBL students participate in a variety of placements, including:
 - School-based enterprises
 - Part-time paid employment
 - High school internships
 - Health Science clinicals
 - Tennessee Certified Pre-Apprenticeships
 - Registered apprenticeships



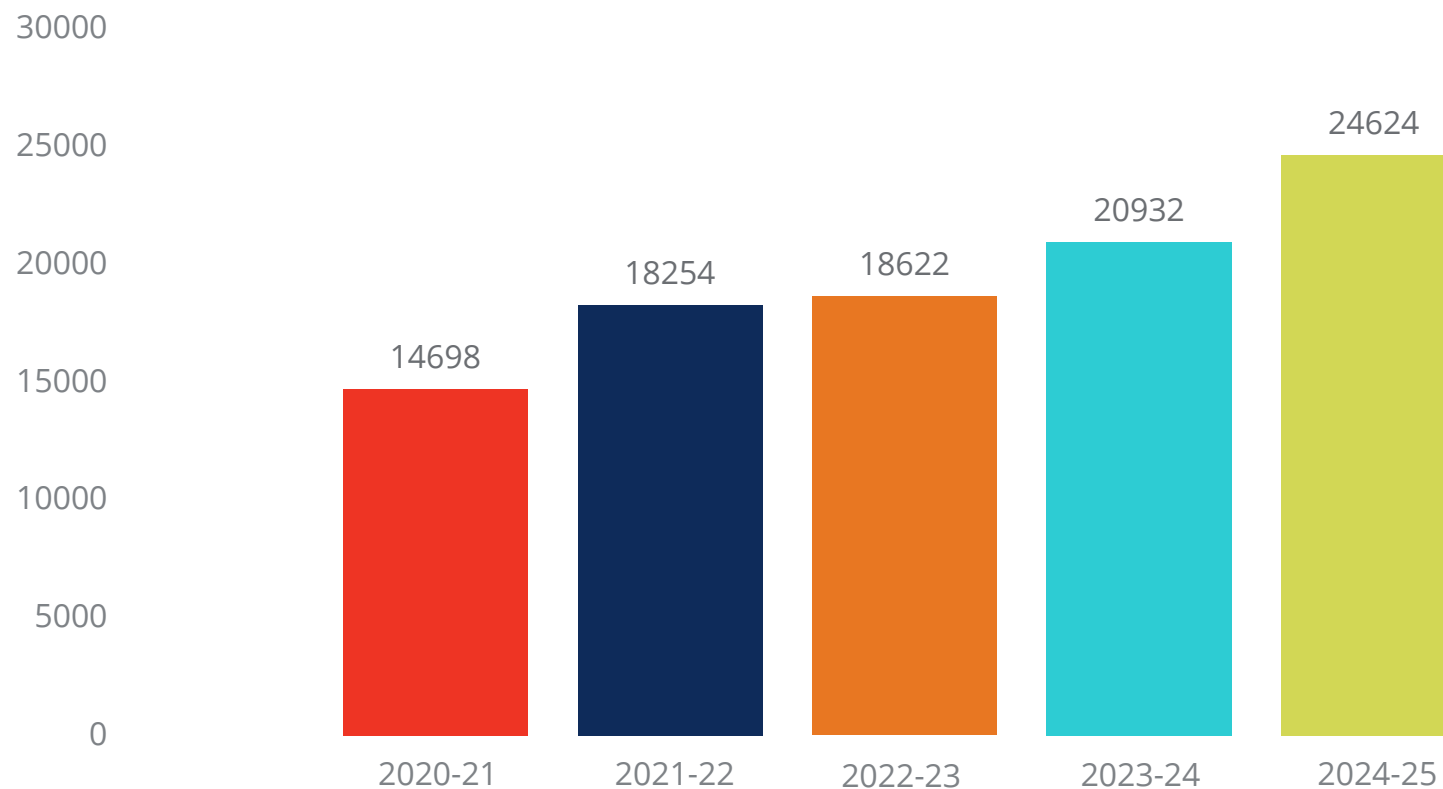
WBL Successes: Aggregate Student Enrollment

WBL Credits Earned: Aggregate



WBL Successes: Special Population Student Enrollment

WBL Credits Earned: Special Populations



WBL Successes: Long-Term Student Outcomes

- According to a study by the Office of Evidence and Impact at the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration, students who participate in WBL courses:
 - Are nearly **25 percent** more likely to seamlessly enroll in postsecondary education after graduation;
 - Have a **12 percent** higher postsecondary completion rate than students who did not participate in WBL; and
 - Maintain an **11 percent** higher median wage than students who did not participate in WBL six years after high school graduation.
 - Among students who do not complete postsecondary education, that difference increases to **14 percent!**



WBL Employer Testimonial



- *“Work-based learning is foundational to our mission at Valmont; not only as a strategy to build a skilled and sustainable workforce, but as a commitment to the people and communities we serve. By partnering with local schools, we’re able to spark student interest in high-demand careers, provide hands-on experience that builds confidence and purpose, and equip students with skills that support both personal growth and economic mobility. The impact of WBL reaches beyond our walls; it strengthens families, fuels local industry, and shapes the future of our region.”*

– Carri Smith, Valmont Industries



WBL Student Testimonial



- *“I always knew college wasn’t for me. When my son was born, I thought my fate was sealed: working long days, hard work with little pay, for the rest of my life. Valmont and this pre-apprenticeship have given me the skills and confidence to not only live in my hometown but also live well and be able to provide for my family. I can still grow and live because of the opportunities given to me through this program.”*

– Marion County WBL Student



WBL Challenges: Scaling Quality WBL Statewide

- Scale high-quality WBL through clarity, access, and employer alignment
 - Define a clear framework for quality WBL
 - Expand access with alternative WBL options
 - Increase employer awareness of youth employment benefits and legality



Addressing WBL Challenges

- Actions underway to expand and strengthen WBL
 - Develop WBL Quality Framework
 - Launch Accelerator initiatives:
 - Employer-facing resources
 - Policy research to boost employer participation
 - Employer grants to test quality components and inform incentives
 - Expand employer engagement, compliance support, and collaboration with TDLWD



Advancement Initiatives for WBL: Looking to the Future

- Moving forward, the department will engage in two new pilots:
 - WBL Quality Framework Pilot
 - Pilot with select districts and employers
 - Refine data collection, evaluation, and reporting
 - Identify challenges and inform implementation guidance
 - EARN Clinical Pathways Pilot
 - Supports students in high-need regions
 - Funds participation in clinical internships
 - Leads to industry-recognized credentials (CNA, CCMA, PCT)



Looking Ahead: Collaborative Employer Outreach

- Employer Engagement Partnership with TLWD
 - Targeted outreach to expand WBL participation
 - Support and strengthen existing employer programs
 - Recruit new employers into WBL
 - Build pathways from WBL → pre-apprenticeship → apprenticeship



Questions?



Thank You!

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