

BEST PRACTICE: SUPPORT MULTIPLE GROUPS OF UNDERSERVED STUDENTS TO ACCESS WORK-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Creating broad eligibility and ensuring universal access to work-based learning (WBL) opportunities is critical. However, states must also develop structures to help high-need students both access and succeed in a WBL experience. Very few states have developed explicit policies or programs to do so.

All states include nondiscrimination language in their WBL policies and, as required by Perkins V and [WIOA](#), identify opportunities for schools to use federal funds to support high-need groups of students. Some states also offer programming to specific groups of students that may include a WBL component. For example, states offer pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities through their vocational rehabilitation services and include supports such as job exploration and counseling, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. Under WIOA, these services may also include WBL opportunities such as internships. Other programs, such as [Jobs for America's Graduates \(JAG\)](#), a nonprofit organization that supports at-risk youth to graduate from high school and transition into postsecondary or career opportunities, may also connect students with WBL opportunities.

But few states – just 19 - have developed policies or programs above and beyond the minimum requirements in Perkins V and WIOA that are designed with the specific goal of ensuring high-need student groups can access and succeed in WBL opportunities. Those states that do take a variety of approaches to supporting underserved student groups, ranging from creating separate WBL programs for certain student groups (e.g., students with disabilities), to requiring that districts include in their applications to operate a WBL program details about the program's plan to support underserved students, to providing additional funding to ensure students have the materials they need to be successful in WBL.

Georgia's [Great Promise Partnership](#), for example, is a public-private partnership that supports at-risk students to stay in and complete high school while simultaneously developing real-world job skills and experiences through WBL opportunities. In Illinois, [state law](#) requires the Department of Children and Family Services to provide eligible youth an apprenticeship stipend to cover the costs associated with entering an apprenticeship, including costs such as tuition for classes, work clothes, or occupation specific tools.

Also in Illinois, the Youth Apprenticeship program provides [wraparound supports](#) to students (e.g., case management and counseling) and holistic upskilling (e.g., technical skills and soft skills), and the Chicago Jobs Council and Young Invincibles [produced a report](#) on integrating diversity across the state apprenticeship system. Within it are practices that high schools and school districts can implement to diversify their student pipeline. Other states provide paid internship opportunities, which can help ensure that students who may otherwise need an after-school job to earn money are able to participate in WBL.

States can take the lead in developing explicit programming or supports to ensure high-need student groups have equitable access to WBL opportunities. Policymakers should take into consideration how all students – rural versus urban communities, students with disabilities, students from all socioeconomic backgrounds, etc. – can take advantage of WBL opportunities.

