



**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**  
**Department of Education**

April 11, 2014

TO: Division Superintendents

FROM: Patricia I. Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction

**SUBJECT: A Strategic Review of Work-Based Learning in Virginia Report**

The Virginia Department of Education is pleased to share with school divisions [\*A Strategic Review of Work-Based Learning in Virginia: Expanding Opportunities for Students\*](#). This report includes the culmination of statewide survey results, national literary research, and input from stakeholders representing business and industry and secondary education from the Department of Education's eight superintendents' regions. The report reinforces the need to (1) redefine the work-based learning (WBL) methods for students in career and technical education; (2) refocus the implementation guidelines to ensure a direct connection between the student's WBL experience and his/her program of studies; (3) provide relevant experiential learning in the workplace that can lead to high-demand, high-skill, high-wage careers; and (4) streamline procedures to increase flexibility for schools in redesigning and offering WBL experiences.

In summary, the report recommends that career and technical education programs redesign WBL experiences to include the following:

- Organize WBL methods into three primary categories, each with a distinct and clearly articulated set of goals:
  - career-exploration — job shadowing, mentorship, introductory internship (foster career and workplace awareness)
  - pre-professional — extended internship and service learning (deepen career and workplace knowledge)
  - career-preparation — clinical experience, student apprenticeship, and cooperative education (develop technical knowledge and skills necessary for direct entry into a specific occupation and/or postsecondary training program).
- Support each WBL method with goal-oriented classroom instruction.
- Make workplace readiness an essential instructional goal of all WBL experiences.
- Communicate that pre-professional WBL methods can be workable as well as effective for students who have limited time due to their class loads and participation in extracurricular activities.
- Continue to explore opportunities for application of proven best practices for implementation of virtual WBL methods.
- Build a strong network of business/industry and community partnerships to support student training experiences.
- Implement meaningful strategies for employer outreach and engagement in the students' learning process.

Employers increasingly expect new hires to come to them primed with work experience and ready to perform at an informed level from day one. WBL offers relevant work experience to middle and high school students. An

investment in WBL can be expected to bring significant returns to individual students, the work force, and the economy.

School divisions are encouraged to take a strategic look at current WBL offerings and determine ways to expand opportunities for students. The revised WBL implementation guide for CTE administrators, teachers, and coordinators will be available in several weeks. Additionally, ongoing virtual and face-to-face training will be offered, beginning April 2014.

If you have any questions, please contact Anne Rowe, coordinator for curriculum and instruction, Office of Career and Technical Education Services, at [cte@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:cte@doe.virginia.gov) or by phone at: (804) 225-3119.

PIW/LBH/cmc