# WORK-BASED LEARNING ACADEMY

## FRAMEWORK

# Overview

A Work-based Learning Academy is an educational program for high school and community college students that offers hands-on learning linking key concepts with real-life applications. This program is designed to bridge the gap between education, business, and workforce development. The career placement will focus on the following target sectors: the food and beverage and light manufacturing sectors. Through collaborative effort, the program help bridge the skill gap, empower tomorrow's workforce, and unlock the potential of communities, businesses, educational institutions, and students.

The Work-based Learning Academy is purposefully designed to cater to the specific needs of a targeted population of high school juniors and seniors who have the benefit of early release from their regular academic schedule. The ages of 17-18 are a crucial time for young people, as it is a period where they begin to explore their interests and potential career paths. By tailoring the academy's programs to this age group, the academy will provide focused and personalized support that addresses these high school students' unique challenges and aspirations. Moreover, the individuals will receive guidance and support from a coach who fosters a feeling of inclusion and a secure, nurturing atmosphere.

The Work-Based Learning Academy will incorporate The DeBruce Foundation's research on skills into its curriculum to prioritize the development of durable skills essential for success across industries and changes in the job market. The academy will integrate communication, collaboration, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, proactivity, and executive function into various aspects of its program.
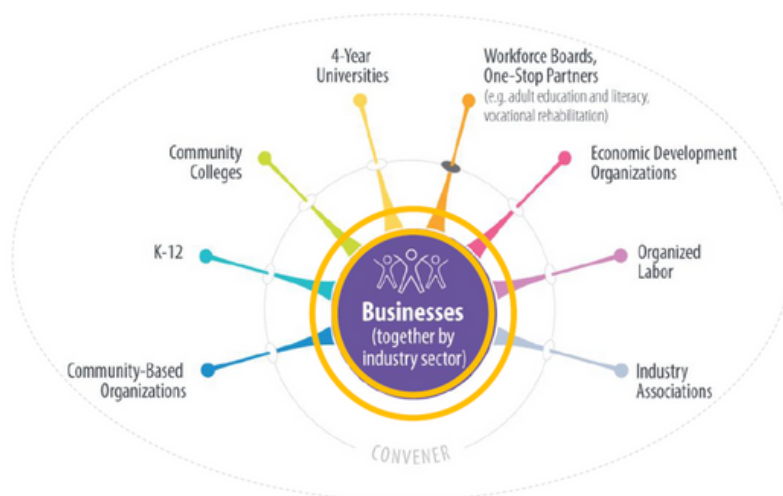


Figure 1:  Sector Approaches Education, Business, and Workforce Services
(Source: Employment and Training Administration – US Department of Labor)

# Regional Sector Alignment

| VCW Piedmont | GO Virginia | Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development |
|---|---|---|
| • Manufacturing & Distribution<br>• Financial & Business Services<br>• Food & Beverage Distribution<br>• Information Technology<br>• Hospitality & Tourism<br>• Healthcare Services | • Light Manufacturing<br>• Financial & Business Services<br>• Food & Beverage Manufacturing<br>• IT & Communications<br>• Biotechnology & Biomedicine | • Advanced Manufacturing<br>• Business and Financial Services<br>• Agribusiness, Food Processing & Technology<br>• Information Technology<br>• Bioscience and Medical Devices<br>• Defense & Security |

**Key features of a work-based learning academy may include:**

**Experiential Learning:** The Academy emphasizes learning by doing. Students will have a chance to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations to gain hands-on experiences that complements classroom learning.

**Mentorship and Guidance:** The work-based learning involves mentorship from experienced professionals who will provide guidance, feedback, and support to students.

**Industry Partnerships**: The academy collaborates with local businesses, industries, and organizations to offer students meaningful work-based learning opportunities.

**Networking Opportunities:** Through the connection to business and industries, students build a network of contacts that would be valuable for their future job search and career growth.

**Skill Development:** Students develop essential employability skills, leadership skills and soft skills during their work-based experiences. These skills enhance their career readiness and increase their potential for future employment.

**Career Awareness:** Work-based learning allows students to explore various career options. This exposure helps them make informed decisions about their educational and career paths.

**Personal Growth:** The Academy's curriculum integrates exercises that aim to foster students' self-esteem, communication skills, and adaptability.
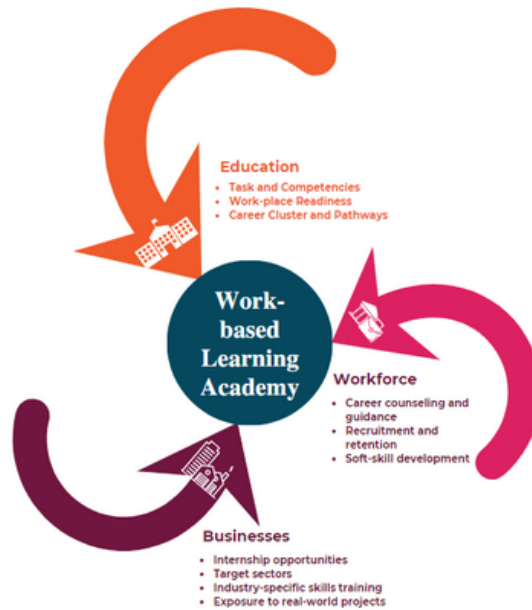
Figure 2: Triangulation of Bridging Education, Business, and Workforce

# Work-based Learning Academy's Objectives

- **Emphasizes career readiness, equipping students with essential soft skills.**

- **Promotes equity by ensuring all students, especially those affected by workplace and educational disparities, have access, with tailored support.**

- **Offers transferable certifications and college credit to expand future opportunities.**

- **Focuses on adaptable skills relevant across diverse workplaces, rather than just specific employers.**

- **Maintains accountability through established metrics to sustain excellence.**

These principles are substantiated by key indicators of quality, including placement within real-world work settings, mentorship and mentor training, rigorous skills verification, and student choice to explore various WBL settings for optimal career alignment.

Students will have an opportunity to engage in real life applications and real-life experiences by responding and adapting quickly to industry demands and student interests. Success will depend on engaged student interests and the collaboration of local school districts and regional business partners. The Academy was built on the essential elements of the Circle of Courage Model to create a sense of belonging, independence, mastery, and generosity while helping youth recognize their merit, value, and worth. [1]

## Belonging

Youth need to know they are cared about by others and feel a sense of connection to others in the group. It is important to provide youth the opportunity to feel physically and emotionally safe while actively participating in a group. The coach and facilitators will provide a safe and inclusive environment, foster a positive relationship with youth learners, and use discussion questions that encourage youth to learn from each other and synthesize and use ideas collaboratively.

## Independence

Youth need to know that they can influence people and events through decision-making and action. They will learn to better understand themselves and become independent thinkers in the academy. Throughout each session youth are given opportunities to explore, investigate, and reflect upon challenges in the workplace. Youth begin to understand that they can act as change agents with confidence and competence as a result of their learning.

## Mastery

Youth need to feel and believe that they are capable, and they must experience success at solving problems and meeting challenges. Youth need breadth and depth of topics that allow them to pursue their interests. The academy is committed to providing young people with top-notch knowledge and fostering their skills to help them achieve a true sense of mastery and accomplishment.
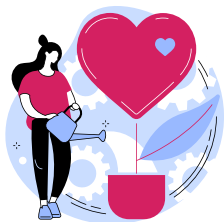
## Generosity

Young people need to feel their lives have meaning and purpose. In the academy, youths are encouraged to broaden their perspectives, find relevance in the topic area and bring ideas back to their community

1  Brendtro, M., Brokenleg, M., Van Bockern, S. (2013). The Circle of Courage: Developing resilience and capacity in youth. International Journal for Talent Development and Creativity, 1(1), 67-74.

# Program Timeline and Locations

## Goal I: Career Awareness and Research

| PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES | Understanding target sectors, career clusters and salary ranges | Understanding major clarity and career pathway | Exploring and practicing creative thinking | Exploring and practicing problem solving |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## Goal II: Self-awareness and Career Alignment

| PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES | Understanding personal interest | Understanding self-awareness and career interest alignment | Exploring effective communication | Understanding and practicing leadership |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## Goal III: Searching for a Career

| PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES | Selecting a career path and entering the workforce | Finding and reading job listings | Completing an application | Understanding and practicing teamwork and interpersonal relationships |
|---|---|---|---|---|

## Goal IV: Securing a Career & Workplace Safety and Health

| PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES | Writing a resume | Creating a portfolio | Preparing for an interview. Participate in mock interviews. | Writing Thank You letters |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Practicing professionalism and productivity | Understanding workers' rights in the workplace | Understanding digital fluency | Understanding a global perspective in the workplace |

## Goal V: Financial Literacy

| PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES | Understanding Onboarding documents | Understanding banks, credit unions, credit cards, credit scores, and growing personal wealth | Understanding your benefits, insurance, retirement, paid time off, and flexible work schedules | Practicing flexibility and time management skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|

# Program Content

## 1. Career Awareness and Research

- Career clusters and salary ranges
- Interest survey
- Personal interest and self-awareness
- Target sectors
- Major clarity
- Post-secondary education and training needs

## 2. Securing a Career

- Job posting boards, Handshake
- Job applications
- Resume types
- Cover letters and CV
- Follow-up letters and Thank you letters
- Interview types and process
- Etiquette- Dress for success: Etiquette and appearance
- Federal, local, state, military clearance
- Accepting a job offer/ background checks

## 3. Workplace Safety and Health

- Labor laws, wages and hour restrictions
- Equipment safety
- Workers' rights, harassment in the workplace, and diversity training
- Safety and health training following OSHA regulation
- Technology usage

## 4. Personal Financial Literacy

- Career clusters and salary ranges
- Interest survey
- Personal interest and self-awareness
- Target sectors
- Major clarity
- Post-secondary education and training needs

## 5. Qualities of Successful Employment

- Time management skills
- Communication, email, public speaking, team building
- Work ethics
- Teamwork and conflict resolution skills
- Critical Thinking and Problem-solving
- Customer service
- Self-evaluation

# Connecting the HQWBL to Virginia's 5 C's and The Life Skills Model

- **Collaboration**: Work with community members, peers, and mentors
- **Communication**: Write and present proposals; make requests and get permissions; publicize and present final project
- **Citizenship**: Understand laws and regulations; seek to improve the community; increase community awareness
- **Creativity**: Publicize/advertise project; solve problems; present findings
- **Critical Thinking**: Develop a project to meet a community need or solve a community problem
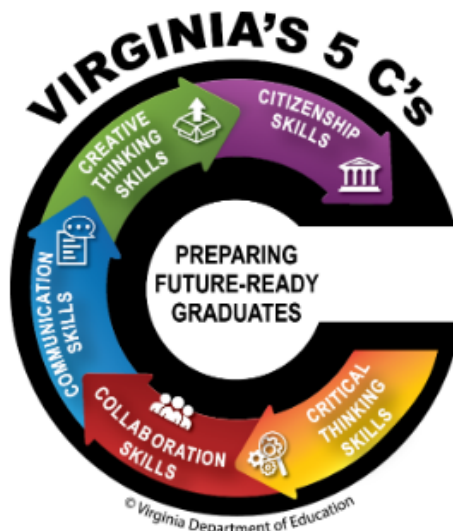


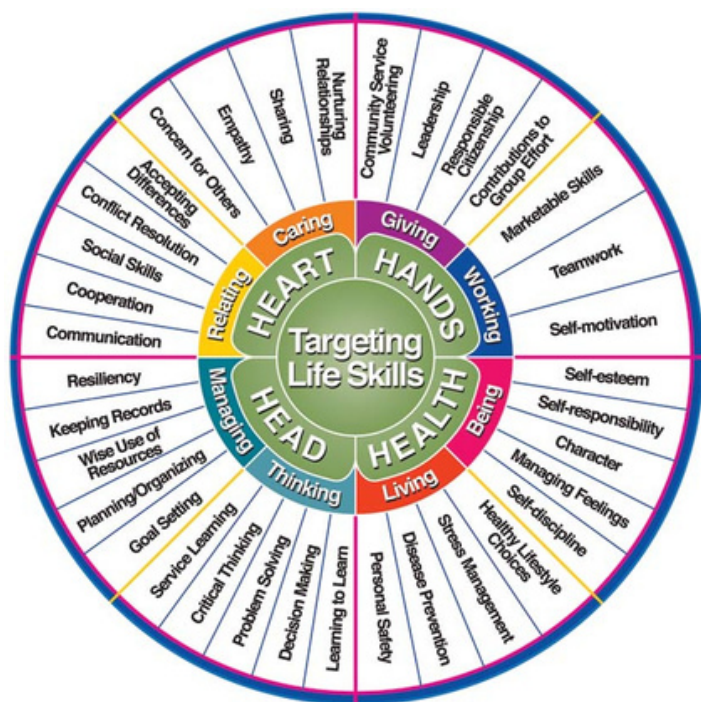Figure 3: Virginia's 5 C from Virginia Department of Education



The Life Skills Model developed by Patricia Hendricks of Iowa 4-H helps young scholars to

- recognize the significance of life skills in shaping the success and well-being of young individuals.
- promote life skills that can help young adults make important decisions.
- teach skills that can improve quality of life.
- equip essential life skills through learning activities to be applied in various aspects of their lives.

Figure 4: The Life Skills Model developed by Patricia Hendricks of Iowa 4-H

# Program Outcome

The Work-based Learning Academy is committed to achieving meaningful program outcomes that have a lasting and positive impact on the careers of the participating youth. The academy aims to deliver a comprehensive and enriching experience, leading to a wide range of desirable outcomes for the students involved.

- Increase the number of youth enrolled in internship with local food and beverage, light manufacturing businesses in the **Piedmont Region**
- Increase the number of youth in career technical education programs
- Ultimately create a pipeline for exceptionally skilled interns for future employment
- Promote the local economy by fostering talent retention.

The pilot program will commence in Nelson, Madison, Fluvanna, Green Counties and Charlottesville City.

Figure 5: A map showing the locations of pilot programs
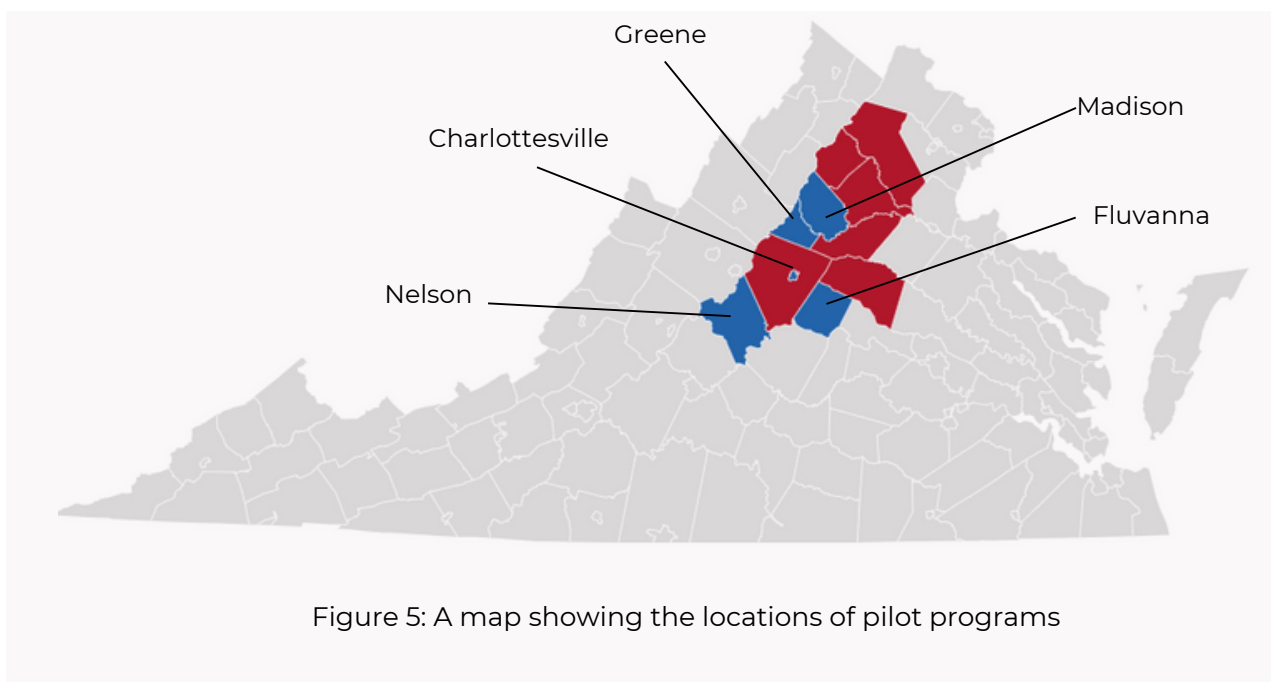
# Resources

**Students' Guide to Internships:**

**https://vcwpiedmont.com/wp-content/uploads/Student-Guide_Final.pdf**

**Educators' Guide to Internships**:

**https://vcwpiedmont.com/wp-content/uploads/Educators-Guide_Final_07.19.23.pdf**

**Employers' Guide to Internships**:

**https://vcwpiedmont.com/wp-content/uploads/Employers-Guide_Final_07.19.23.pdf**

**Fact Sheet #71: Internship Programs Under the Fair Labor Standards Act:**

**https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/71-flsa-internships**

**Identification of Student Internship Programs:**

**https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter2/section22.1-17.3/**