

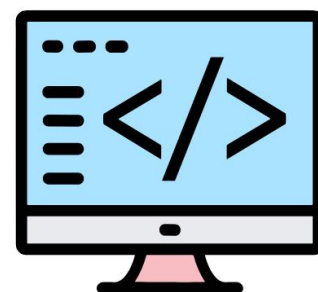
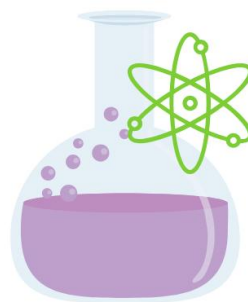


VSBA

Virginia School Boards Association

Leadership • Advocacy • Support

2026 Workforce Readiness Month Toolkit



WORKFORCE READINESS IS ROOTED IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

Participation in VSBA initiatives and observances is optional. School boards in Virginia have the discretion on whether to participate locally. Any related materials from the Association are shared as suggested ideas for implementation for any member board that may choose to do so.

April 2026 – VSBA Workforce Readiness

Dear School Board Members/Superintendents:

To emphasize the importance of workforce readiness opportunities that prepare students for success in today's economy, the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) has designated April as **VSBA Workforce Readiness Month**, with **April 16, 2026, recognized as Workforce Readiness Day in Virginia**.

The VSBA Task Force on Workforce Readiness was established by the VSBA Board of Directors in 2015 to study how career and technical education programs are being implemented in Virginia school divisions and how these programs are preparing the state's future workforce.

The Task Force has been vital in providing local school boards with best practices for developing and expanding Career & Technical Education (CTE) as well as workforce readiness programs that offer training on skill sets that will allow students to be globally competitive. It is also critical to collaborate with the businesses and community colleges to ensure that students have early access and the opportunity to participate in workforce readiness programs. In September of 2024 the VSBA Task Force was moved to be a subcommittee of the Task Force on Students and Schools in Challenging Environments where it continues to function today.

VSBA will promote Workforce Readiness Month through our newsletter, website, and social media. We encourage school divisions to issue their own news releases and share any related activities with VSBA. Suggested activities include:

- **Adopt a proclamation** – a sample proclamation that your board can use is enclosed.
- **Engage local media** by writing a letter to the editor or inviting reporters to cover workforce readiness or CTE initiatives in your division.
- **Host an event** on Workforce Readiness Day (April 16, 2026).
- **Highlight work-based learning opportunities** (internships, apprenticeships, job-shadowing, etc.) for students and recognize local businesses and organizations that provide them.
- **Organize student contests** (poster, video, writing, etc.) highlighting the importance of workforce readiness throughout the month.
- **Showcase CTE and workforce readiness programs** on your division's website and social media throughout the month.
- **Recognize CTE educators and business partners** at a school board meeting in April.
- **Conduct workforce readiness workshops** in partnership with businesses and community colleges to highlight existing programs.

This guide includes a variety of resources to support these efforts, including the Task Force's key initiatives, a sample proclamation, a sample news release, a sample letter to the editor, and sample social media posts.

Workforce readiness efforts across Virginia are *Rooted in Public Education*, recognizing that strong communities begin with strong schools. By supporting educators and investing in programs that build real-world skills, industry partnerships, and career pathways, public education is preparing students to thrive in the future.

Divisions are encouraged to showcase their workforce and career readiness programs, including expanding workforce and technology pathways. To submit a *Rooted in Public Education* story—either written or video—please contact Bella Corbo at 434-295-8722 ext. 2 or bella@vsba.org.

We encourage you to take part in this initiative by raising awareness, exploring new strategies, and reviewing current workforce development trends. Your participation will help shape opportunities that enhance student success beyond graduation.

Sincerely,



Jenny Nichols, VSBA President



Gina G. Patterson, Executive Director

Key Goals & Findings

In 2026, the Workforce Readiness Committee is focusing on the following key initiatives:

- **Industry Partnership for Career-Readiness Programs:** A resource helping school divisions establish and maintain partnerships with local businesses, creating internship, job shadowing, and mentorship opportunities that support both literacy development and career readiness.
- **Workplace Literacy & Career Skills Assessment Tool:** Evidence-based instruments and best practices to measure students career readiness skills, enabling schools to evaluate how effectively they prepare students for workforce success.
- **Career Mentorship with Literacy Focus:** Best practice strategies connecting students with industry professionals, emphasizing the critical link between strong literacy skills and career success while providing meaningful career exploration opportunities.
- **Virginia Workforce Pathways: *High-Demand Jobs Without a Bachelor's Degree*:** Research identifying high-demand jobs in Virginia offering strong career prospects, competitive wages, and long-term growth opportunities. Analysis includes skilled trades, healthcare, technology, and manufacturing sectors, with comprehensive data on job requirements, median salaries, needed skills, and educational alternatives.

The previous work of the Task Force included:

In Fall 2015, the Task Force conducted a statewide survey of public school divisions to gather information on CTE across the Commonwealth. From this survey, the following five goals were developed for the Task Force:

- Funding Innovation and Workforce Development (Pre-K–12)
- Addressing the CTE teacher shortage
- Survey Superintendents
- Identifying and promoting replication of best practices in the Commonwealth
- Promoting career education and workforce development

On January 18, 2016, the Task Force findings were presented to the House Education Committee:

- Increased funding is needed to sustain current programs, develop new programs, update equipment and resources, and obtain the highest quality instructors.
- There is a need for greater collaboration between business/industry leaders and CTE.
- The ability to employ the most qualified personnel for CTE instruction is an ongoing issue.
- Increased collaboration with business and industry, the community college system, and the core school setting is necessary.
- The impact of scheduling, graduation requirements, and Standards of Learning (SOL) demands significantly affect a student's availability to be enrolled in CTE programs.
- Virtual learning and distance learning options should be explored in order to expand workforce training opportunities throughout the Commonwealth.
- The need for earlier introduction of career education and other options is necessary for both students and families.
- Enhance the integration of essential employment skills or soft skills and ethics throughout our K-12 classrooms.

To address the urgency of filling these positions, both college and career readiness must be central to the mission of our K-12 schools. The demand for highly skilled jobs over the next decade in Virginia will continue to increase. These jobs can be filled by qualified public school students.

SAMPLE Proclamation

WHEREAS, workforce readiness is essential to developing skill sets for students in Virginia's public schools to be successful beyond high school graduation; and

WHEREAS, the demand for highly skilled jobs over the next decade in Virginia will continue to increase and can be filled by qualified public schools' students; and

WHEREAS, work-based learning opportunities, such as internships, apprenticeships, mentorships, and project-based experiences, give students practical skills and insights while helping employers build a strong talent pipeline; and

WHEREAS, we recognize increased collaboration with business and industry, the community college system, and the core school setting is necessary; and

WHEREAS, the promise of public education is for every child to be successful in school and life; and

WHEREAS, it is important for Virginia families, students, teachers, and school administrators to be actively engaged in supporting the importance of workforce readiness as part of the educational experience; and;

WHEREAS, we recognize that limited funding, resources, facilities, partnerships, and qualified Career & Technical Education staff impedes student access to workforce readiness opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Workforce Readiness Month provides an opportunity to celebrate and recognize the work of our local school division and divisions across the Commonwealth providing workforce development pathways for students; and

Now, **THEREFORE**, be it Resolved, the _____ division joins the Virginia School Boards Association in recognizing the month of April 2026 as Workforce Readiness Month and April 16, 2026, as Workforce Readiness Day, with the intention to advocate and increase awareness about the supports necessary to promote workforce development opportunities that enable students to be prepared to succeed in a global economy.

Sample News Release

News Release

For Immediate Release

[DATE]

Contact

[NAME]

[EMAIL, PHONE]

April is VSBA Workforce Readiness Month

April 16, 2026, Designated as Workforce Readiness Day

[CITY/COUNTY], VA – School board members, superintendents, teachers, and families play a critical role in supporting students with obtaining the skill sets necessary to be successful beyond high school graduation. This is why the Virginia School Boards Association (VSBA) has declared April to be Workforce Readiness Month and April 16, 2026, as Workforce Readiness Day.

Rooted in Public Education, Workforce readiness and Career & Technical Education (CTE) programs can give students the training needed to succeed for life. Additionally, these programs help students understand how their learning applies to the needs of employers. Regardless of whether students are headed directly to college or the workforce, this type of education will prepare them for the future.

The demand for highly skilled jobs over the next decade in Virginia continues to increase. These jobs can be filled by qualified public school students. [INSERT SCHOOL DIVISION NAME] is committed to offering workforce development and work-based learning opportunities that will enable students to be successful and globally competitive. Partnerships can take many forms: apprenticeships, internships, career fairs, guest speakers, hands-on demonstrations, educator externships, and more. The school division currently engages with partners to provide [INSERT CTE OR WORKFORCE READINESS PROGRAMS, BUSINESS AND/OR COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS] and is ready to expand opportunities to offer students exposure to career pathways and real-world learning experiences

[INSERT QUOTE FROM BOARD MEMBER AND/OR SUPERINTENDENT]

Local activities include [INSERT LIST OF ACTIVITIES]

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About the Virginia School Boards Association

The Virginia School Boards Association, a voluntary, nonpartisan organization of Virginia school boards, promotes excellence in public education through advocacy, training and services. The Association offers conferences, information, training, and counseling designed to meet the needs of the Commonwealth's educational leaders.

Sample Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

The month of April marks the annual observance of Workforce Readiness Month. As we celebrate this initiative, it is essential to recognize the critical role that our public schools play in preparing students for successful futures. Workforce readiness is not just about career training – it's about equipping students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving economy.

Across [SCHOOL DIVISION NAME], we are committed to ensuring that every student is prepared for life beyond the classroom. Our schools offer robust Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, apprenticeships, internships, and partnerships with local businesses and industries. These opportunities provide students with hands-on learning experiences that connect classroom instruction with real-world applications.

Workforce readiness is a shared responsibility between schools, businesses, and the community. By investing in workforce development initiatives, we are not only setting students up for success but also strengthening our local economy. Employers are looking for skilled, adaptable, and innovative workers – qualities that our students develop through high-quality educational programs.


We encourage our community to join us in celebrating Workforce Readiness Month by supporting local schools, recognizing students' achievements, and advocating for continued investment in workforce development programs. Together, we can ensure that today's students are ready to become tomorrow's leaders, innovators, and workforce professionals.

Sincerely,
[SUPERINTENDENT]
[SCHOOL DIVISION NAME]


Sample Social Media Posts

To support school divisions and school board members in raising awareness and sharing consistent messaging during VSBA Workforce Readiness Month and Workforce Readiness Day (April 16, 2026), the following sample social media posts are provided with the option for customization. These templates highlight the importance of workforce readiness, reinforce the vital role of school boards and community partners, and promote ongoing efforts to support student success across Virginia.

Workforce Readiness Month

 Workforce readiness is Rooted in Public Education.

Every day, our schools prepare students with real-world skills, hands-on learning, and career pathways that lead to opportunity. Strong schools build strong communities. #VSBAWorkforceReadinessMonth #RootedinPublicEd


From CTE programs to dual enrollment and industry certifications, our students are gaining the skills they need for tomorrow's workforce—today.  #VSBAWorkforceReadinessMonth #RootedinPublicEd

Workforce readiness opens doors. 

Through internships, career pathways, and technology programs, our students are discovering their passions and preparing for success beyond graduation. #VSBAWorkforceReadinessMonth #RootedinPublicEd

Workforce readiness thrives through collaboration. 

We're proud to partner with local businesses and industries to provide students with meaningful, career-connected learning experiences. #VSBAWorkforceReadinessMonth #RootedinPublicEd


Behind every workforce-ready student is a dedicated educator. 

This month, we celebrate the teachers and staff who help students build skills, confidence, and purpose for the future. #VSBAWorkforceReadinessMonth #RootedinPublicEd

Workforce Readiness Day (April 16, 2026)

Today is Workforce Readiness Day! 

We're celebrating the programs, partnerships, and people who help prepare our students for meaningful careers and lifelong success. #VSBAWorkforceReadinessDay #RootedinPublicEd

On Workforce Readiness Day, we're proud to spotlight students who are gaining hands-on experience, industry credentials, and career skills that set them up for success.  #VSBAWorkforceReadinessDay #RootedinPublicEd

It's Workforce Readiness Day! 

Public education is building tomorrow's workforce by connecting students to career pathways, technology, and real-world learning opportunities. #VSBAWorkforceReadinessDay #RootedinPublicEd

Strong workforce readiness begins with strong leadership.

On Workforce Readiness Day, we recognize the school boards, educators, and community partners who make these opportunities possible for our students. #VSBAWorkforceReadinessDay #RootedinPublicEd

Workforce readiness isn't just about jobs—it's about opportunity.

Today, we celebrate how public education empowers students to dream big and achieve more.  #VSBAWorkforceReadinessDay #RootedinPublicEd



VSBA

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