Are Louisiana's High School Students Getting Enough Real-World Experience?

Leaders for a Better Louisiana

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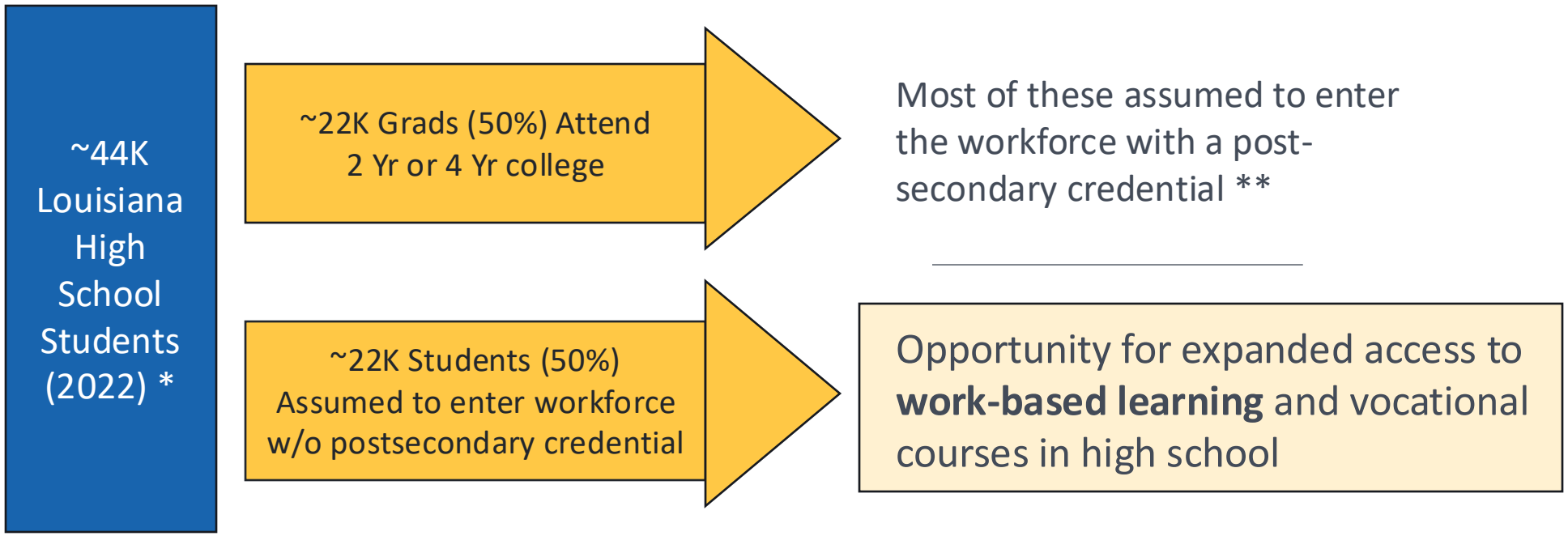
Key Rationale For Understanding High School Internship and Apprenticeship and its Data

- There is growing interest in "**work-based learning"** which prepares students for careers through real-world on-the-job experience and aligning education with workforce needs.
- Louisiana encourages "registered apprenticeships" but these have traditionally not been geared toward secondary students, though current Louisiana law allows apprentices as young as 16. Expanding access for high school students could strengthen workforce readiness pathways.
- Starting for the first time **this coming August 2025, the new Louisiana School Accountability System** formula includes work-based learning opportunities as a means for schools/districts to earn points toward their rankings. High schools will be evaluated based on student participation in internships/apprenticeships and more motivated to connect students with businesses.
- There is a need for education leaders to establish benchmarking data to measure progress over time, ensure effective policy implementation and continuous improvement.
- By strengthening workforce readiness, Louisiana can address skill gaps and increase post-graduation success as well as build stronger partnerships between schools, businesses, and communities.

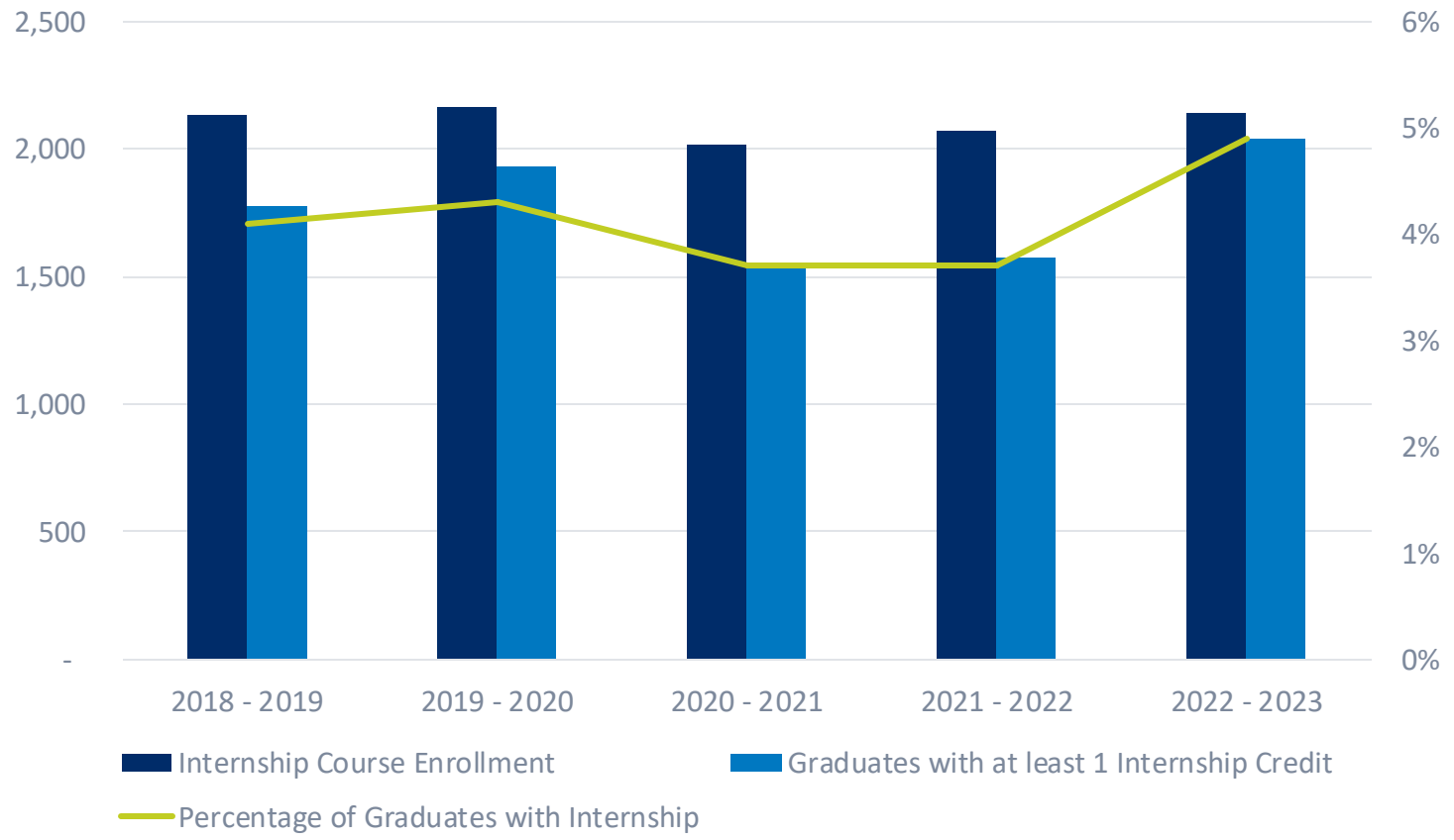
At present rates, 22,000 high school students enter the workforce without a postsecondary credential



* Two percent of 2022 high school cohort were non-completers and counted as part of the population entering workforce
** At current rates, 70% of the 2022 Cohort attending 2/4 Yr College could enter the workforce with a post-secondary credential

Source: Louisiana Department of Education; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

Louisiana hit a record number and share of students graduating with an internship credit



Source: Louisiana Department of Education

Analysis

- Around 2,000 high school students in Louisiana earned an internship credit
- This represents ~5% of high school graduating seniors
- This is nearly 500 more than the previous year
- The overall number is relatively stagnant over the last 5 years, although it has reached pre-COVID levels

Fewer students in Louisiana complete internships

2022-23 School Year (most states don't report data)

State	Internship/WBL Course Enrollments	High School Graduates	Graduates with Internship Credit	% of Grads with Internship*
Louisiana	2,143 internships	41,990	2,037	4.9%
Georgia	27,594 work-based learning placements	106,740	*N/A*	*15 – 25%*
Tennessee	22,641 students	63,530	*N/A*	*20 – 30%*

Source: Louisiana Department of Education; Georgia Department of Education; Tennessee Department of Education; National Center for Education Statistics; Better Louisiana analysis

* Estimates for Georgia and Tennessee, Better Louisiana analysis

Analysis

- Louisiana should push to increase its work-based learning programs, low engagement compared to Georgia and Tennessee
- Louisiana's new education accountability formula may affect this, starting in 2025-26
- Definitions of "internship" or "work-based learning" vary between states and affects the comparison

Louisiana has strict requirements for a position to be counted as a credit-worthy internship

Total Duration: A minimum of 7,965 minutes (approximately 133 hours) is required to earn one Carnegie Unit.

On-the-Job Training: At least 106.2 hours must be dedicated to on-the-job training with an employer.

Classroom Instruction: A minimum of 26.55 hours (20% of the total required time) should be allocated to classroom instruction, focusing on soft skills such as financial literacy and workplace communication.

Weekly Structure: Classroom sessions should occur at least once per week throughout the course and can be conducted virtually. Instructor should make 4 visits.

Source: Louisiana Department of Education; Georgia Department of Education; Tennessee Department of Education; National Center for Education Statistics; Better Louisiana analysis

Analysis

Comparing to nearby states:

- GA: Five types of programs (not just internships) require 150 hours of instruction to receive credit
- TN: Not required for graduation, can fill elective requirements
- FL: Certain internships can be counted for course credit; hours requirements vary

States vary in their approach to securing internships for high schoolers

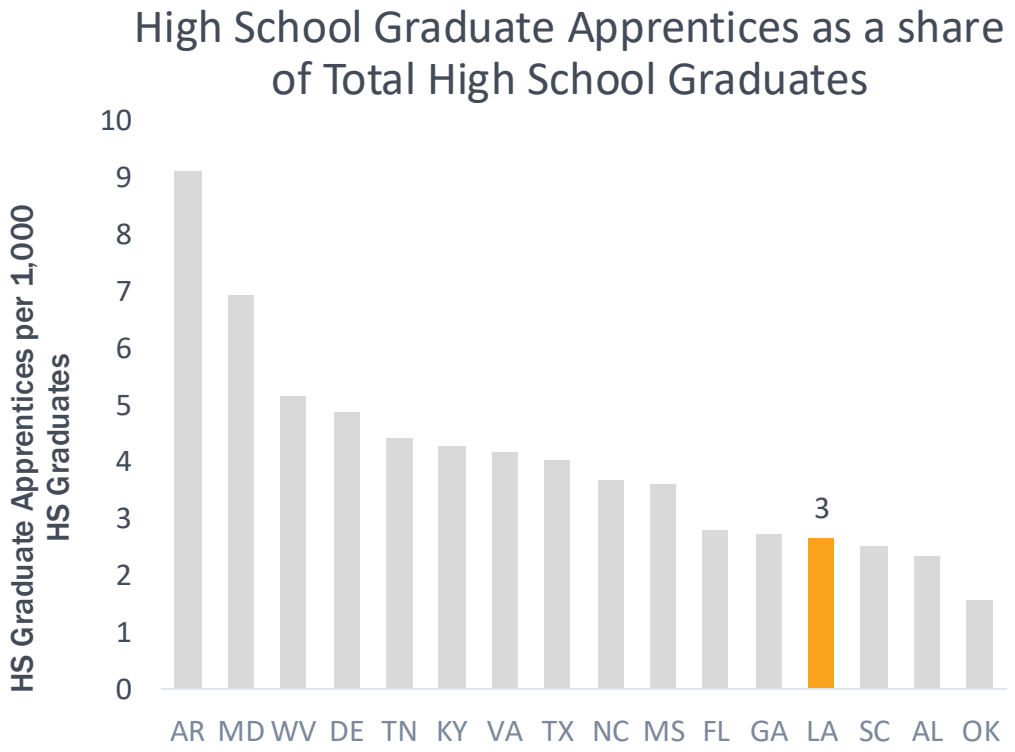
State	Who coordinates and secures internships for students?
Louisiana	Work-based learning (WBL) coordinators not historically responsible for securing internship opportunities. The state's system is decentralized. Some local organizations act as employer intermediaries to coordinate industry involvement.
Georgia	GA's network of WBL coordinators are employed by school districts, often have teaching experience, and are responsible for coordinating directly with businesses to place students in appropriate experiences. Over 500 coordinators statewide.
Tennessee	TN's WBL coordinators play a role in employer engagement, but this can also be carried out by a school's career coach or through local organizations and community partners.

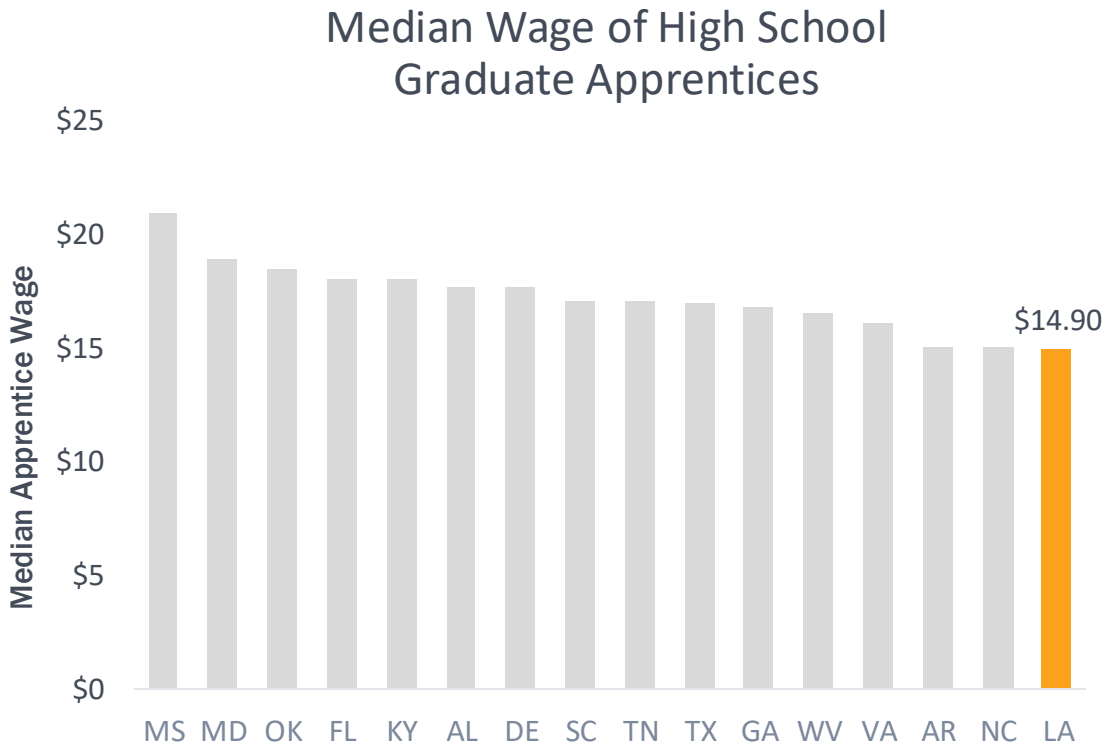
Source: Louisiana Department of Education; Georgia Department of Education; Tennessee Department of Education; LBL Analysis

Analysis

- Roles differ for WBL coordinators:
  - Louisiana's are required to educate employers about child labor laws and conduct site visits
  - Tennessee's are empowered to secure internships, not required
  - Georgia's are required to engage directly with employers to secure internships
- Louisiana could boost engagement for WBL placements

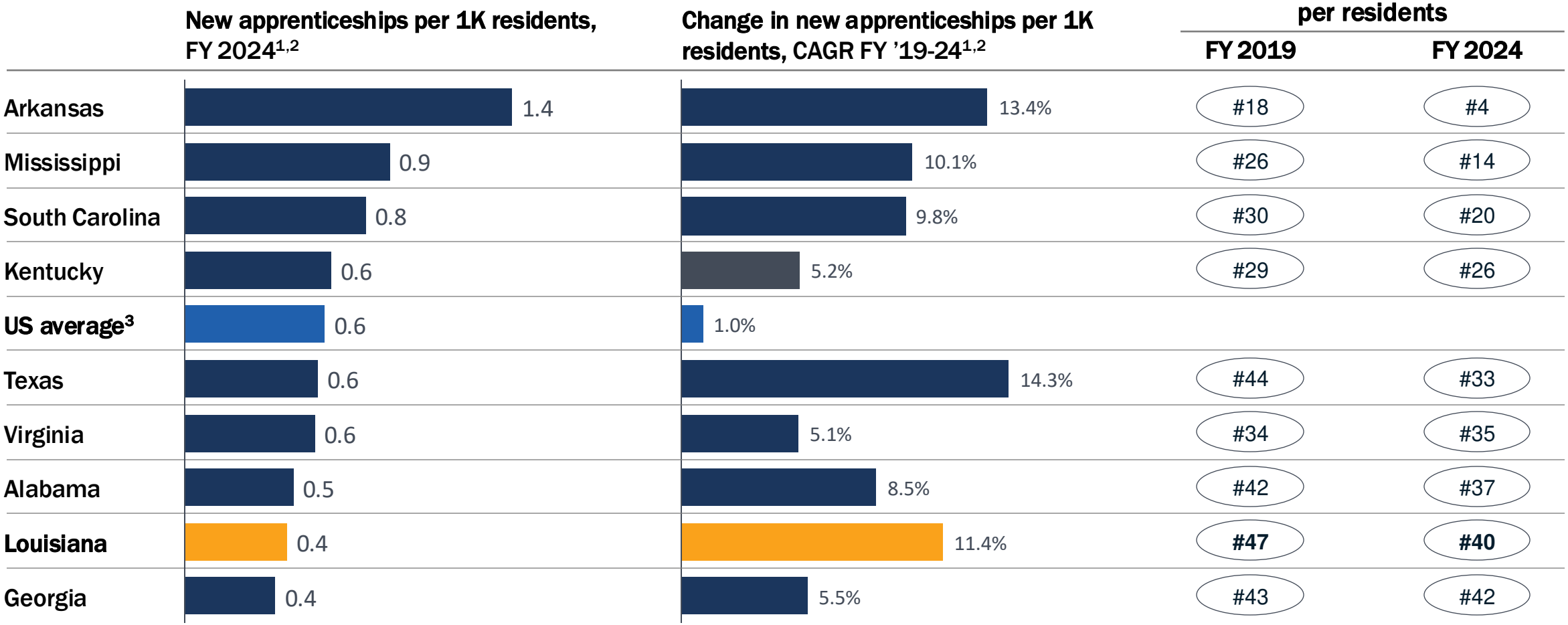
Louisiana has fewer high school graduate apprentices than peers and are paid the least





Source: Apprenticeship USA; US Census Bureau American Community Survey 2023 1-year estimates

Louisiana has a low rate of apprenticeships per capita compared to peers, but has seen growth



1. The Department of Labor's registered apprenticeship fiscal years run from October to September; the FY 2024 is from 10/01/2023 to 9/30/24
2. Population data for the full years of 2018 and 2023 used to calculate rate of apprenticeships per capita for FYs 2019 and 2024
3. Excludes apprentices in the US Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP) and other national programs to be comparable to growth in state programs.

Source: US Department of Labor; US Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Conclusion and Key Findings

- 5% of Louisiana high school graduates earned an internship credit, an increase of nearly 500 students from the previous year. Overall participation (2K) in internships for school credit has remained relatively unchanged over the last five years. Benchmarking against two states shows opportunity for significantly increasing these numbers.
- Louisiana's new education Accountability System Formula takes effect in 2025, giving points for paid work-based learning (internships) at a business with at least 133 hours, possibly motivating schools/districts to pursue more business placements for students
- Louisiana's district-based Work-Based Learning (WBL) coordinators focus on compliance rather than securing internships. Georgia and Tennessee have district-based WBL coordinators actively engaging employers and building partnerships.
- Louisiana has a low number of high school apprentices compared to peer states and high school graduating apprentices in Louisiana earn lower median wages.
- Louisiana's existing tax credit programs that encourage employers to hire youth and apprentices, especially as high schoolers, may need changes to encourage greater adoption.