



'Work Ethic Diploma' offers Hawkins County students a career boost

[Jeff Bobo](#) • Jun 1, 2015 at 1:05 PM
jbobo@timesnews.net

ROGERSVILLE — Beginning in 2015-16, Hawkins County Schools will partner with area businesses and some neighboring school systems to offer high school seniors a leg up on a career if they meet certain criteria.

The “Work Ethic Diploma” is part of the Tennessee LEAP (Labor Education Alignment Program) grant program. Students who earn the Work Ethic Diploma will be given preference for job interviews at the partnering industries if they meet all other qualifications of the job posting. Hawkins County Schools is partnering with Hamblen County Schools, Grainger County Schools, Tennessee College of Applied Technology (Morristown and Phipps Bend campuses), and Walters State Community College. Among the industry partners are Baldor, Cooper Standard, TRW in Hawkins County, Clayton Homes in Grainger County, Alcoa Howmet, Career Professionals, Citizen Tribune, Colgate Palmolive, Color Tech, International Paper, JTEKT Automotive, Kawasaki TN, Mahle, Meritor, Otis, Rich’s, Team Technologies, and Tuff Torq in Hamblen County. “I am extremely excited that Hawkins County Schools will be able to offer another opportunity to enable our students to be better prepared for college and career success,” said Director of Schools Steve Starnes. “Earning the Work Ethic Diploma will provide Hawkins County students a competitive advantage as they prepare to enter the workforce or post-secondary education. I would like to thank Baldor, Cooper Standard, and TRW for their support and encourage other area industries to participate.” Any business that would like to join the Work Ethic Diploma program can call the Hawkins County School System at (423) 272-7629. Ask to speak with Wayland Seaton, who is career and technical education supervisor; or Wes Smith who is middle and high school supervisor. Participating students will receive a list of Work Ethic Diploma Standards which includes 14 achievement categories. Each achievement category has one, two, or three

subcategories that are assigned a point value. Students who sign up for the Work Ethic Diploma must complete enough of the goals set out in the achievement categories to score 20 points in order to receive the diploma. For example, category one is "Attendance Standard." The student scores one point for having no more than five absences during their senior year; two points for no more than three absences; and three points for no more than one absence. Other categories deal with discipline, GPA, CTE coursework, dual enrollment, and participation in industrial awareness programs. All Hawkins County seniors will be presented with information on how to participate in the program when the 2015-16 school year begins. The objective of Tennessee LEAP is to eliminate skills gaps across the state in a proactive, data-driven, and coordinated manner by encouraging collaboration across education and industry and by utilizing regional workforce data to identify and then fill skills gaps across the state. To do this, Tennessee LEAP will work to:

- Establish a Skills Gap Grant competition to provide \$10 million in state funds to support local Drive to 55 alignment groups. These groups will be modeled after groups already succeeding in the state, such as Nashville's Skills Panel and the Department of Education-led Pathways to Prosperity.
- Local alignment groups will help develop skills gap forecasts, identify the highest priorities, develop programs or equipment needed to fill those gaps, and then submit applications for grants to help fund these programs.