

Work-Based Learning Manual

A Guide for Developing and Implementing Quality Experiences for Students

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(Modified July 2016)



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"In order to see this gap [global achievement gap] between what many kids are being taught by competent teachers every day in good schools versus what the world will require of them, you have to spend considerable time understanding what's going on in both the "Old World" of classrooms and in the "New World" of work.

Moving between these two worlds, I have come to understand that there is a core set of survival skills for today's workplace, as well as for lifelong learning and active citizenship - skills that are neither taught nor tested even in our best school systems. Young people who want to earn more than minimum wage and who go out into the world without the new survival skills I've uncovered in my research are crippled for life; they are simply unprepared to be active and informed citizens or to be adults who will continue to be stimulated by new information and ideas..."

- Quote from Tony Wagner's "The Global Achievement Gap"

Acknowledgements

In late 2010 the Vermont Agency of Education convened a Work-Based Learning Committee to bring a new focus to the essential element of work-based learning as part of Vermont high schools' efforts to transform learning to make it more relevant and student centered. The group decided that its first task was to establish a set of 'gold standards' that broadly defined quality work-based learning. Credit must be given to the [National Academy Foundation's Gold Standards for High School Internships](#) as the primary reference point for establishing the new Vermont Standards for Work-Based Learning.

The committee's second charge was to utilize the Gold Standards as the foundation for rewriting Vermont's Work-Based Learning Manual, which had been produced in 1998 as part of the state's School-to-Work initiative. It should be noted that while the format of the manual has been restructured to follow the standards, much of the text from that manual has been reproduced in this rewrite, reflective of the considerable research and high quality effort that went into production of the first version. We are indebted to Mary Mulloy of the Vermont Agency of Education and Robin Morton formerly of the Vermont Chamber of Commerce Business Education Partnership who were primarily responsible for its development. Contributions to the manual were made by a large number of practitioners from schools and agencies across the state.

As for the current version, the Agency of Education commissioned Linking Learning to Life, working in partnership with Upper Valley Business and Education Partnership, to carry out the rewrite. We would like to thank Linking Learning to Life and the Upper Valley Business and Education Partnership for the role they played in developing this new Work-Based Learning Manual. We would also like to acknowledge the support of Greg Voorheis from the Vermont Department of Labor for reviewing the sections related to legal issues, and the work of the entire Work-Based Learning Committee for review and revisions of the standards and manual drafts.

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Introduction

The vision, stated below, for transforming education in Vermont, particularly at the secondary level, has been further defined and articulated by the Commissioner of Education and other education leaders in the state. Part of this articulation describes the concept of flexible pathways through which all students can successfully complete high school. Elements that might be included in a student's unique pathway include career and technical education programs, blended/virtual learning options, dual enrollment programming with Vermont postsecondary institutions, and work-based learning experiences.

“Every learner completes his or her public education with the knowledge and skills necessary for success in college, continuing education, careers and the community. The public education system provides flexible learning environments rich with 21st century tools that promote self-development, academic achievement, and active engagement in learning. It operates within a framework of high expectations for every learner with support from educators, families and the community.” - Transformative Education in VT Summary Vision Statement, VT State Board and VT Agency of Education, 2010

What is Work-Based Learning

Work-based learning (WBL) is learning that results from students engaging in activities on site with employers and designed to increase the knowledge and skills of the learner. The work experience is supplemented with instruction and activities that apply, reinforce, refine, or extend the learning that occurs during work, so that learners develop attitudes, knowledge, skills, and habits that might not develop from work experience alone.

WBL creates opportunities for employers and schools to provide structured learning experiences to develop workplace readiness, technical skills and 21st Century Skills. It is a process that allows students to explore careers, connect with businesses, learn about the functions of an organization, and understand the relevance of their education. Work-based learning experiences are activities that involve actual work experience or that connect classroom learning to employment and careers. Through work-based learning experiences, educational programs become more relevant, rigorous, challenging, and rewarding for students, parents, educators, and businesses. These opportunities particularly help students make the connection between academic principles and real world applications. For many, being able to answer the question ‘Why do I need to know this?’ provides motivation for more learning.

In addition to being an important component of good educational experience, work-based learning is essential to developing Vermont's future workforce. There are very significant

workforce development needs related to all Vermont youth that were described eloquently in the report from the [Next Generation Commission: Linking Learning to Earning in Vermont](#) (Dec. 2006). This group was appointed by the Governor and Vermont Legislature to review Vermont's workforce concerns and recommend solutions. In essence, the Vermont workforce will need to retain and train beyond high school as many Vermont youth as possible, including those that may have been considered 'on the fringe'. The Next Generation Commission made four recommendations to address the pending workforce crisis in Vermont. One of these recommendations is:

"Raise postsecondary aspirations by markedly strengthening career awareness education beginning in elementary school. Continue exposure to careers and the need for postsecondary education and training in middle and high schools through technical education, school-to-work initiatives, internships, dual enrollment, and other efforts."

Whether the reader is beginning to create work-based learning opportunities at their school, or whether the reader is in need of a reference to an already flourishing work-based learning program, this manual is intended to help Vermont schools develop programs that will raise postsecondary aspirations and that will expose students to the realities of today's workplace.

"Vermont faces critical demographic shifts in the near future and must implement bold strategies immediately if it is to retain its economic vitality. Current predictions forecast that the total number of Vermonters over the age of 65 will double during the next 25 years, but the number of taxpaying adults will remain approximately the same. Public school enrollments are projected to continue to decline. In addition, even if the high school graduation rates remain stable, the number of students pursuing postsecondary education will likely decrease... experts predict that Vermont employers will find it increasingly difficult to locate skilled workers to fill available jobs." - Next Generation Commission Report

Objectives

This manual's primary aim is to assist practitioners in schools and community based organizations with developing and implementing quality school-to-work, internship, and other work-based learning experiences for all students.

This manual serves as a guiding framework for defining not only the roles and responsibilities of the coordinator, but also the elements of quality program planning and implementation. Please note, that the information in this guide is general information on legal considerations related to work-based learning and does not carry the force of legal opinion.

21st Century Skills

WBL & 21st Century Skills = Success in the Workplace

The 21st century introduces a plethora of new challenges to youth growing up during these times, especially when it comes to becoming ready for the workforce. These challenges include the following:

- A hyper-competitive economic environment where many skills are becoming commoditized so that only the most creative, competent, and innovative people can succeed
- Globalization and introduction of cross-cultural work environments that demand cultural competency
- Constantly changing workplace demands that require adaptation and self-initiative
- Rapidly shifting technology trends that require the workforce to be fluent in using the latest technologies

WBL prepares youth to tackle these challenges and successfully transition into the 21st century workforce. The [Partnership for 21st Century Skills](#) has created a [Framework for 21st Century Learning](#). WBL offers students opportunities to practice 21st century skills in these three focus areas.

- Financial, economic, business and entrepreneurial literacy
- Learning and innovation skills
- Life and career skills

While there are a number of definitions for 21st Century Skills, most of the core competencies are similar. A useful framework for listing these essential skills comes from Tony Wagner's *The Global Achievement Gap* (2008). In it he defines the Seven Survival Skills for Teens Today as:

- Critical thinking and problem solving
- Collaboration across networks and leading by influence
- Agility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Entrepreneurialism
- Effective oral and written communication
- Acquiring and analyzing information
- Curiosity and Imagination

Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes

Mastery of **core subjects and 21st century themes** is essential to student success. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government and civics.

In addition, schools must promote an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving **21st century interdisciplinary themes** into core subjects:

- Global Awareness
- Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy
- Civic Literacy
- Health Literacy
- Environmental Literacy

Learning and Innovation Skills

Learning and innovation skills are what separate students who are prepared for increasingly complex life and work environments in today's world and those who are not. They include:

- Creativity and Innovation
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
- Communication and Collaboration

Information, Media and Technology Skills

Today, we live in a technology and media-driven environment, marked by access to an abundance of information, rapid changes in technology tools and the ability to collaborate and make individual contributions on an unprecedented scale. Effective citizens and workers must be able to exhibit a range of functional and critical thinking skills, such as:

- Information Literacy
- Media Literacy
- ICT (Information, Communications and Technology) Literacy

Life and Career Skills

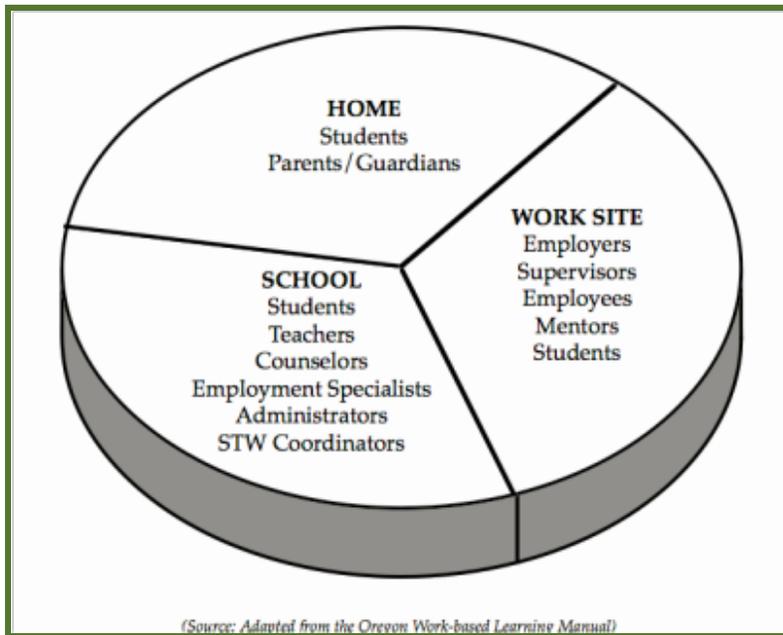
Today's life and work environments require far more than thinking skills and content knowledge. The ability to navigate the complex life and work environments in the globally competitive information age requires students to pay rigorous attention to developing adequate life and career skills, such as:

- Flexibility and Adaptability
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability

For more information about [21st Century Skills](#).

Involving Participants in Work-Based Learning

Any work-based learning opportunity involves the participants described in the graphic while providing an opportunity for employers and schools to offer students structured learning experiences that develop broad transferable skills. This is a process which allows students to meet academic standards and find inspiration in a hands-on, real life environment while developing employability skills and career awareness. Success depends on the involvement and commitment of all participants: schools, employers, students, and parents/guardians.



Further Definitions of Work-Based Learning

There are many different definitions of work-based learning. According to Linked Learning's [Pathways to College and Career Success](#), "Work-based learning is an educational strategy that provides a range of experiences that are intentionally designed to help students extend and deepen classroom work and make progress toward learning outcomes that are difficult to achieve through classroom or standard project-based learning alone."

For additional definition/explanation of WBL, see:

<http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/workbasedlearning.htm>

Foundation of a Strong WBL Program

The Qualified Professional

High quality WBL opportunities require planning and are carried out by trained, qualified, and properly credentialed professionals either based at the school or working on behalf of the school through an intermediary organization in the community. In Vermont there are people serving as WBL coordinators who function in a number of different capacities. For example: the career and technical education centers are required to have a licensed co-operative education/student apprenticeship coordinator (SBR 2379(5)) and some middle and high schools employ school-to-work coordinators, special educators, career class instructors, guidance staff, service learning coordinators who arrange WBL experiences. Partner non-profits or human service agencies may employ career development staff, employment specialists, job placement or internship coordinators and the like.

Whoever is responsible for helping to support students and employers with setting up quality learning experiences in the community should be well prepared to make these experiences safe, successful, and meaningful for the student.

WBL Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities

These services may include the following:

- Promoting work-based learning
- Orienting students, parents/guardians, and employers
- Working with students to develop measurable learning goals and objectives that connect their experience to academic standards
- Conducting or arranging classroom activities related to pre-employment skills, work readiness and job search skills
- Counseling students about jobs and careers
- Assisting students with questions and forms relating to work
- Developing job sites and work-based learning placements
- Matching students with employers
- Providing basic safety training as appropriate to the placement
- Assessing student performance at school and at the worksite
- Conducting on-site employer visits to monitor and evaluate student progress
- Maintaining professional relationships with employers
- Taking disciplinary action when necessary in relation to classroom activities or worksite placements
- Attending professionally related trainings and conferences
- Completing records and forms

Integration of Academic Standards

A well-planned continuum of career development incorporates high-level academic achievement. Career exploration activities such as job shadowing give students a chance to see the connection between what they are learning in school and what skills are required in the workplace. By observing people at work, students understand first-hand the importance of math, science, technology, communication, teamwork, critical thinking and problem solving. Through WBL activities, a student's classroom is extended to the workplace. Students actually put skills learned in the classroom to use in the workplace while learning new, job-related skills. When students can see the connection between schools and their future, they often gain a new appreciation for schoolwork. As described in the [Common Core State Standards](#), integrating academics with work-based learning is essential to ensure students are college and career ready.

The American School Counselor Association's [National Standards](#) suggest that "Students will understand the relationship of academics to the world of work and to life at home and in the community." According to the ASCA, in order to relate school to life experiences, students must:

- demonstrate the ability to balance school, studies, extracurricular activities, leisure time and family life, and seek co-curricular and community experiences to enhance the school experience;
- understand the relationship between learning and work;
- demonstrate an understanding of the value of lifelong learning as essential to seeking, obtaining and maintaining life goals;
- understand that school success is the preparation to make the transition from student to community member; and
- understand how school success and academic achievement enhance future career and vocational opportunities.

Awarding Academic Credit for Work-based Learning

Students enrolled in a WBL program should be eligible to earn credit for both the classroom instruction and the supervised work experience. The actual amount of credit earned will vary depending on each school's policies and practices. In the case of internships, students sometimes earn credit rather than wages, but that is determined by the school and the employer, and needs to adhere to applicable [labor laws](#).

Legal Matters

While these experiences provide a rich source of instruction and are a valuable resource to educators, employers, and students, they also add additional legal concerns and responsibilities. **This section should not be a substitute for the advice of an attorney or of the government agencies charged with administering and enforcing the laws. In addition, any risk management plan developed for work-based learning opportunities should always be reviewed by legal and risk management experts before implementation.**

Many parents, employers, and schools are confused or uninformed regarding the mix of federal and state laws and regulations that apply to young people in the workplace. It is essential that educators and employers become knowledgeable about liability issues and laws governing students in the workplace. Employers must comply with federal and state child labor laws and regulations that address wage and hour, and workplace safety requirements for minors. Those who place students in the workplace need to understand the laws and have a responsibility to the students (and parents/guardians) involved in the WBL program to provide comprehensive information concerning risks associated with work-based learning. By providing this detailed information, the WBL professional allows the student and his/her family to make an informed decision about student participation in a WBL experience.

This section of the manual is intended to highlight some of the basic legal issues pertaining to work-based learning including wage and hour laws, risk management issues, nondiscrimination laws, and confidentiality concerns. A subsequent section will address safety concerns. Neither section will provide all the answers. In some cases it will evoke more questions. It will help work-based learning professional to identify potential problems and create the steps toward solutions.

Risk Management & Insurance

The old adage “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” can certainly apply to work-based learning opportunities. If the school and the WBL professional have created reasonable plans for students in WBL activities, and the WBL professional has done their diligence to ensure students, families, and employers are educated about their rights and responsibilities, and has taken steps to make sure the workplace setting will be safe and in compliance with established labor laws, then the preventative steps have been taken.

Even with every possible prevention measure taken, accidents can and do happen. This is why insurance is important. No one counts on an accident happening, but having proper insurance

coverage indicates that a potential negative outcome has been considered in the planning of WBL opportunities.

In order to minimize the potential financial risks to the school related to the work-based learning activities of its students, the school will need to acquire appropriate insurance coverage. This section of the manual cannot guarantee perfect coverage, or that no misfortunes will happen, but hopefully it will help you and your school to attain fairly comprehensive coverage for work-based learning activities.

If you are not an administrator, work with your school's administration to address concerns related to insurance coverage. You will need their support and approval. Administration may choose to address the situation themselves. With a little research, you will be able to determine the insurance coverage your school already has or needs to have in place.

General Liability Insurance

Liability is not accident or medical insurance. Its purpose is to protect the insured against claims of negligence. Negligence exists when a duty is owed to another and a non-intentional breach of that duty occurs, resulting in some form of physical injury and/or property damage.

Liability Insurance Questions

Does it cover work-based learning activities including traditional school activities? (typically yes)
Does it cover work-based learning activities that take place during or after school hours?
Does it cover work-based learning activities that are on, or off school grounds?
Does it cover work-based learning activities that are, or are not supervised by a school employee?
Are there any exclusions?
Does it cover students?
Does it provide medical payment coverage? (typically no)
What is the coverage provided?

School liability policies typically only cover the liability exposure of the school and teachers. It is recommended that you get written verification from your school's insurance carrier or underwriter stating that the policy will cover work-based learning activities. In order to make sure the carrier knows what coverage you need, provide them with a list of work-based learning activities. If the carrier does not understand the issues well, and you can get permission to work with the underwriter, the underwriter can be the best source of information about the bottom line of your school's policy. Make sure the coverage will be active when

students are engaged in any and all work-based learning activities, including those that are not during traditional school hours, not on school grounds, and not directly supervised by a school employee. If your policy does not provide coverage that encompasses these three requirements, the school and the individual arranging work-based learning activities may not be protected by insurance coverage when students are involved in situations as simple as job shadows.

Ask your carrier about riders and endorsements. Some general liability policies will allow you to add a work-based learning rider to the existing policy so that it will cover work-based learning activities. Some companies also offer various work-based learning endorsements which can make your policy more comprehensive.

Another question to ask is whether your school's liability policy has any exclusions, such as malpractice (health services) or a garage exclusion. Policies often have exclusions for situations such as these that are considered high risk. If such an exclusion exists you should not place students at those types of worksites, or you may be able to negotiate a rider to the policy allowing such placements. That would require administrative support and funding.

Another issue to address is whether the policy covers students. If a student causes damage at a work-based learning site (for example, they mistakenly delete precious files from a computer), would the student be covered by the liability policy?

If the answer is no, negotiate a rider to the policy. Verify that the school's liability policy protects the school against third party suits for paid and un-paid placements. If an accident occurs in a paid placement, the student is covered by workers' compensation. The student-employee can't sue the employer but the parents, as a third party, can sue the school.

The last question to ask is whether the policy provides medical coverage for accidents if a student is hurt. Typically the answer will be no, which brings us to the next type of insurance.

Basic Voluntary Student Accident Insurance

Basic accident insurance is offered to students through the school but generally is not required. Most basic voluntary student accident insurance programs provide maximum benefits up to \$25,000; some programs include \$50,000 and \$100,000 benefit maximums. For certain activities such as school sports, student accident insurance may be encouraged. Most traditional accident insurance policies require the student to be on the school site and/or under the direct supervision of a school employee for the student to be covered, unless other provisions are

made within the actual policy. With the exception of school sponsored and supervised field trips, work-based learning activities frequently are not covered by such policies.

If this type of insurance is offered through your school, verify with the carrier that the policy will cover work-based learning activities. Sending the carrier an outline of work-based learning activities is helpful. Again, it is important to make sure that coverage will be active when students are engaged in any and all activities, including those that are not during traditional school hours, not on school grounds and are not directly supervised by a school employee. If the policy meets these requirements, and you are sending students out on work-based learning activities, document whether or not the student's family has purchased the accident policy. Some of these policies offer "school time only" and 24-hour coverage options. So, also document which policy the student has. Most "school time only" options provide coverage only for work-based learning activities that take place during school hours. Define what "school hours" are and verify with the carrier whether or not the policy has any time exclusions before assuming students are covered for activities that take place outside of school hours.

Student Accident Catastrophic Insurance

Student accident catastrophic insurance serves as a potential stop-loss for a school in case of a major injury. Most basic voluntary student accident insurance programs provide maximum benefits up to \$25,000; some programs include \$50,000 and \$100,000 benefit maximums. Catastrophic insurance has much higher maximum benefits such as one to five million, along with a substantial deductible amount that assumes the existence of a basic accident insurance policy or a process for self-insurance.

Should an accident occur, a student's family medical and/or voluntary accident insurance policy, if they have such coverage, may cover medical expenses. If so, such policies often provide coverage only up to a point. Beyond that, catastrophic insurance acts as a stop-loss for the school. Whether or not your school's liability policy has a medical payment exclusion, the school may want to purchase catastrophic insurance. This type of coverage is typically inexpensive, with different rates for athletics, work-based learning and regular students. Schools and school districts can pool together to purchase policies, making it even more affordable. The value of obtaining this type of coverage can be well illustrated by the settlement of a case at a school in northern Vermont which did not have catastrophic insurance and where a student was seriously injured. In most cases parents would not sue a school system because their child was injured if all of their medical costs were covered. In the case of this Vermont

school the final settlement, which was for medical costs alone, would have paid their catastrophic insurance policy premiums for 156 years.

As with liability insurance, verify with the carrier that your school's catastrophic insurance policy will cover work-based learning activities. Sending the carrier an outline of work-based learning activities is helpful. Again, it is important to make sure that coverage will be active when students are engaged in any and all activities, including those that are not during traditional school hours, not on school grounds, and are not directly supervised by a school employee.

Family Medical Insurance

If a student is covered by a family medical insurance policy, it may or may not cover the student while he/she is engaged in school activities and it may or may not cover accidents.

As with the voluntary accident insurance, verify whether or not a student is covered by medical insurance and if the policy covers accidents. Consider sending home a form requesting the name of the policy, policy number, effective dates, and parent(s) signature. Keep in mind that some families will be sensitive to the request for such information. Suggest to the parents that they verify with their carrier that the policy will cover the student while at school or engaged in school work-based learning activities. Even if the parents verify that the student is covered, this type of insurance is not as reliable as the others. For example, while a family may have coverage when the student enrolls in a work-based learning program, a month later the family may cancel the policy or miss a payment losing the coverage. If the policy has a high deductible, it might benefit the family to purchase a voluntary accident insurance policy for their child.

Other Basic Accident Insurance Options

Another insurance product that is available in some places is called "slots". This type of insurance provides basic accident coverage for students while engaged in work-based learning activities that are non-paid. Many students can be rotated through each slot given that only one student is using it at a time. You need only to purchase enough slots to cover the maximum number of students that would be out on an unpaid work-based learning activity at a time. With this insurance in place, the existence of a family medical or voluntary accident policy for the student is not as crucial.

Workers' Compensation

Workers' compensation is insurance that compensates an individual's lost wages (a percentage) due to injury suffered while on the job and covers medical costs, disability rehabilitation, the loss of functional capacity and survivor benefits, as well as providing liability protection for the employer.

Individuals who are engaged in a paid employee-employer relationship must be covered by the employer. Any student involved in a paid work-based learning position must be covered by workers' compensation insurance. Currently in Vermont, workers' compensation coverage for the student is the responsibility of the employer. **Do not place any students into a paid work position if the employer does not or will not cover the student with workers' compensation insurance.** It is illegal according to both state and federal law to have a paid employee who is not covered by workers' compensation insurance. Before placing a student in a paid employment position verify that the employer has workers' compensation insurance, or that the student has such coverage through the school or other party specifically for that position.

Transportation Insurance

Transportation of work-based learning students is a complex insurance issue. Transporting students in a school bus is probably the safest situation, assuming the school has all the proper insurances in place. However, a school bus is not always practical when working with one or just a few students. When using a bus, make sure you follow all school procedures and protocols, such as permission slips.

Most schools have general liability policies that provide secondary liability insurance for employees who transport students, as required by Vermont statute (Source: [16 VSA §1756 \(b\)](#)). This means that the adult's personal auto insurance will pay first and the school policy will pay second. If the adult's policy will not cover the situation, the school's policy generally then becomes the primary policy. It is very important to check with your school on their protocol for driving students. Some schools will not allow people to drive students unless their personal policy will cover them to drive students and unless their policy covers them up to a specific amount. Some policies also provide secondary coverage for volunteers, such as parents, to drive students. Insurance companies often require that the school have copies on file of the volunteers' driver's licenses and insurance cards.

1. Student driving himself/herself: Check school policies and protocols around students transporting themselves and others. If a student drives him/herself to a work-based learning site, prepare a transportation agreement including the following:
 - Parental permission to drive, including:

- verification that student and car are covered by insurance
 - statement that the car to be used is safe and inspected
 - other agreements as needed (see sample form)
 - parent and student signatures
 - Copy of student's driver's license and insurance card on file
1. Students driving other students: Generally the practice of students driving other students is discouraged as being a very risky situation. However, if you choose to let students drive one another to a work-based learning site, prepare a transportation agreement to include the following:
- Parental permission to drive, including:
 - verification that student and car are covered by insurance
 - statement that the car to be used is safe and inspected
 - parental permission for their child to drive the other student(s)
 - parental permission for their child to be driven by the other student
 - other agreements as needed (see sample form)
 - parent and student signatures
 - Copy of student's driver's license and insurance card on file
 - Teacher/other person driving a student: Minimally, do the following:
 - Get written parental permission for the student to be driven by the given person
 - Have the adult verify with his/her insurance carrier that he/she is covered to transport students
 - Follow school policy and protocols on transporting students in private vehicles
 - Verify with the school's general liability insurance carrier that adults will receive at least secondary coverage through the policy when transporting students, and which adults are authorized under this coverage
 - Inform the adult driver of coverage and protocols

Other Insurance Considerations

When a work-based learning activity involves a business or a site off school grounds, verify that the site has commercial general liability insurance. The employer should verify that its policy will cover them when hosting students.

- Always verify with the school administration, what policies and protocols and checklists you need to follow for the activities you are implementing. If these strategies are not in place make sure they are established. The issues to be addressed include:
 - protocol for student placement
 - ensuring student safety
 - expectations of students

- Insurance policies that cover work-based learning activities sometimes have a definition of “to monitor” which outlines what is expected of the person coordinating the work-based learning activity including supervision requirements, pre-placement activities, and site review requirements.
- Work-based learning activities usually assume or require a connection between the activity and the student’s academic program, either for credit or not for credit.
- Always make sure forms are returned signed.
- Another issue to address is that of doing background checks on business and community people who will be working with your students. Check with your school administration on the school’s policies and protocols around doing background checks on people who are not employees of the school but who will work with students directly in a work-based learning activity.

Discrimination and Harassment

Federal and state laws ban sexual harassment in both public educational programs and in employment situations.

Discrimination in the workplace is defined as treating a person (or group of people) differently or less favorably because of a particular characteristic.

Harassment in the workplace is defined as unwanted comments or conduct by a co-worker, boss, or other employee that is based on a protected characteristic and that is severe enough to create a hostile work environment. Harassment based on sex is the most common type.

(Definitions provided by EEOC.gov)

In employment situations Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) of 1990 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and [Vermont’s Fair Employment Practices Act](#) ban discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion (sometimes referred to as creed), sex, age, disability, sexual orientation (VT), or gender identity (VT) for both employees and job applicants.

In educational programs, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (“ADA”) of 1990 paired with Vermont’s statutes covering places of public accommodation (schools are included) prohibit discrimination based on the same characteristics.

Practitioners who place students in a work-based learning site are required to obtain assurances from the employer indicating that they do not engage in discriminatory practices based on the characteristics mentioned above. Any agreements with employers should be in writing and should also include assurances that they abide by applicable labor laws. Include a section on your worksite checklist noting that you have addressed this area of concern. In addition, to comply with the ADA, make sure that the worksite is accessible and that students with disabilities have the accommodations they need to participate in the work-based learning experience. If the experience is paid, the employer would be responsible for providing those accommodations based on the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal employment related anti-discrimination laws. In the State of Vermont, the Attorney General's office investigates complaints and oversees enforcement of the state's employment related anti-discrimination laws in private sector employment while the Human Right Commission is responsible for investigating complaints from the public sector.

The EEOC has a website geared toward youth in the workplace with a number of resources related to discrimination. The website can be found at: [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for Youth](#)

Sexual harassment can be a very troubling issue in a work-based learning situation. By taking a series of precautions you can alleviate the chances of having a serious problem arise. Every agreement used for work-based learning student participation needs a section that indicates that an employer is expected to maintain a safe working environment. A safe working environment includes protection from discrimination and harassment of any kind. The school has an obligation and a right to terminate the agreement at any time if there is a breach in the above stipulated items.

As required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (34 CFR Part 106 §106.9), a school that receives any federal financial assistance is required to publish a continuous notice of non-discrimination in brochures, pamphlets, fact sheets, etc. describing a program or service offered by the school or recruiting students to participate in a program or service – including work-based learning experiences. An example is provided below:

The _____ SUPERVISORY UNION/SCHOOL/TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, and marital/civil union status in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs and activities. The SUPERVISORY

UNION /SCHOOL/TECHNICAL EDUCATION CENTER provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. For questions about this policy, please contact: xx[name or title]xx at 802-xxx-xxxx.

Wages and Hour Laws

Even though labor laws may not always apply in a work-based learning situation, you are encouraged to adhere to child labor laws with regard to hours and hazardous working conditions. Compliance with federal child labor laws ([Fair Labor standards Act \(FLSA\)](#)) and Vermont's state labor laws (child labor [21 V.S.A. §431](#)) is an important part of a safe, successful, and meaningful work-based learning program. The close alignment of the two laws ensures that compliance can be more easily achieved as the rules for youth employment are clear and comprehensive for employers. Guidance that is provided by the federal and state departments of labor is invaluable in assisting a school-based coordinator in determining hazardous jobs or working conditions for children.

What is the youngest age at which a person can be employed?

- Vermont's law has time and hour restrictions for children under the age of 16.
- Occupational restrictions for children under the age of 18, similar to those in the federal law.
- Note: In Vermont there are exemptions for children employed as a performer/actor, agricultural worker, or employed in domestic service.
- Vermont allows children to work in some professions at age 14.
- Might a certificate of eligibility be required?

Vermont only requires employment certificates issued by the Department of Labor for minors if:

- (a) the child is under 16 years of age, and
- (b) employed during school hours in other than a duly approved educational or technical course of study.

Also under Vermont law, employers are strongly encouraged, for their own protection, to maintain a certified copy of a birth certificate for all minors they employ ([21 VSA §431](#)).

TRAINING OR EMPLOYMENT

Work performed by students in work-based learning may constitute employment (and subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)) or training (not subject to FLSA).

The U.S. Department of Labor Wage & Hour Division established criteria based on U.S. Supreme Court interpretations of the FLSA for determining whether work is employment or training.

Youth Employment Resources:

[VT Department of Labor - Youth Labor](#)

[VT Department of Labor - Youth Rules](#)

Fact Sheets specifically related to youth employment (also good for employers):

[VT Department of Labor - Youth Rules Fact Sheets](#)

The applicability of the labor laws depends on whether a student involved in work-based learning has the role of student, voluntary trainee, or employee. The student's status is critical in the design, implementation, and monitoring of all work-based learning experiences.

In general, a student is considered a trainee not covered by FLSA if ALL of the following criteria are continuously met:

- The training, even though it includes actual operation of the facilities of the employer, is similar to that which would be given in a vocational school
- The training is for the benefit of the trainees or students
- The trainees or students do not displace regular employees, but work under their close supervision
- The employer that provides the training derives no immediate advantage for the activities of the trainees or students and on occasion the employer's operations may actually be impeded
- The trainees or students are not necessarily entitled to a job at the conclusion of the learning experience (although employers may offer jobs to students who complete training) The employer and the trainees or students understand that the trainees or students are not entitled to wages or other compensation for the time spent in training (although a stipend may be paid for expenses).

Refer to the related Fact Sheet on Internships from the U.S. Department of Labor found here:

[US Department of Labor - Internships Fact Sheet](#)

In the event that any one of these criteria is absent, the work performed by the student will likely constitute employment subject to the provisions of the FLSA. If a student meets all the criteria and is determined to be a trainee, wages are not paid and labor laws do not apply. A

stipend may be paid to reimburse expenses such as books or tools, but not as a substitute for wages.

If a student is determined to be an employee, then both state and federal child labor laws cover the work-based learning placement. Both jurisdictions regulate only those workers under 18 years of age, after which they are considered to be adult workers protected by state and federal general labor laws.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality in a work-based learning experience is a two-way street. An employer or potential employer may ask questions regarding a student. Students in a worksite may also be privy to confidential information regarding the employer or the business' customers.

When working with students in work-based learning sites, it is important to release student information such as classes taken, skills, and grades to employers. You may provide directory-type information which includes the following:

- Student's name
- Student's address
- Student's date and place of birth
- Student's major field of study
- Student's participation in officially recognized sports or activities
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Dates of attendance
- Degrees and awards received
- Most recent previous educational institution attended

Information which does not fall under the directory-type of information is considered to be confidential information (Source: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations ([FERPA](#)) 34CFR§99.1).

All confidential information, including a student's social security number, can be shared only with the signed permission of the student (age 18 and over) or the student's parent/guardian (under age 18). It is a good idea to have a student and/or their parent/guardian sign an information release form before making a work-based learning placement. The information release statement may also be contained in the training contract.

Employers may also be concerned that a student in a work-based learning experience will share confidential information regarding the employer's business or its customers with those outside

of the worksite. Explain to the student the importance of confidential information and what the employer's rules are regarding information. A student may be asked by the employer to sign a form stating that they understand the rules, and that they will keep such information confidential.

Some students may be engaged in a hospital or other healthcare setting. In this case, confidential employer information may also be confidential patient information. While students do not have a "need to know" information from patient charts and files, they may become privy to confidential patient information that is protected by the [Health Insurance Privacy and Portability Act \(HIPPA\)](#). This would be the employer's responsibility to ensure students are properly trained to protect confidential patient information they may come into contact with.

Safety

Background Checks

School district policy may require a Criminal Background Check be completed on any person who directly works or volunteers with youth. Consult with school administrators regarding this issue. This may apply to a variety of WBL activities.

At the Worksite

The importance of ensuring the safety of each student during a WBL activity is vital to the success of the program. All activities from worksite field trips to service learning to paid work experience must be monitored and students must be protected at all times.

There are several types of work that are potentially hazardous to young people. These include:

- working in or around motor vehicles;
- working near electrical hazards;
- working in retail and service businesses where there is a risk of robbery;
- working on ladders, scaffolds, roofs or construction sites;
- working around cooking appliances;
- continuous manual lifting and lifting of heavy objects; and,
- operating tractors and other heavy equipment.

Educator and Employer Toolkit

The WBL coordinator must be familiar with laws pertaining to hazardous occupations. Important information and a toolkit for educators and employers is available at:

[VT Department of Labor - Youth Rules](#)

Preventing hazards and accidents is the collective responsibility of the WBL coordinator, the employer, the supervisor, and the student. Prior to students engaging in an activity at the site, the WBL coordinator surveys the potential risks for students. Corrective actions should be made by the employer before a WBL activity begins. The WBL coordinator monitors the site throughout the experience and addresses basic safety rules in the school-based curriculum.

The employer is responsible for maintaining a safe work environment, eliminating hazards, training students to recognize hazards and use safe work practices, complying with child labor laws, evaluating equipment, and providing appropriate supervision. The student's immediate supervisor is responsible for monitoring the safety of the student and instructing the student when the need arises.

If an employer needs assistance with safety and compliance, the WBL coordinator could suggest the employer access a free resource from the Vermont Department of Labor. The resource is called: Project WorkSAFE and it involves free consultation and no penalties for violations provided the employer resolves any safety violations.

Each student is also responsible for taking steps to protect him or herself. They should know their rights, participate in training programs, recognize the potential for injury at work, ask questions, and follow safe work practices. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration makes the following resource available to youth workers, specifically aimed at educating young workers about their rights and responsibilities related to a safe workplace. The website is:

[OSHA - Safe Workplace for Young Workers](#)

Sadly, every year about 70 teens die from work injuries in the United States. Another 70,000 get hurt badly enough that they go to a hospital emergency room.

In order to ensure student safety, it is recommended that you do the following:

- Contact the Vermont Department of Labor to check on workplace safety requirements.
- Include safety items in your worksite evaluation forms.
- Visit worksites before placing students and identify safety concerns.
- Identify needed safety equipment (e.g., safety glasses, steel-toed boots) and how to provide.
- Talk with the employer and the student's worksite supervisor about safety issues. You may want to give them a copy of the information contained in the Work Safe This Summer: Employer's Guide to Teen Worker Safety or other safety publications.

- Train students on safety issues before they go into the workplace. A free training resource, made available by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration at the US Department of Labor can be found here: [OSHA - Training Resource for Young Workers](#). The website has a training component that addresses nearly all of the hazardous occupations for youth.
- Ensure that students placed in child care facilities, medical facilities, and other sites where they may be in potential contact with body fluids or wastes are inoculated with the Hepatitis B vaccine, or at least given the opportunity to be inoculated. *If the WBL activity is paid, the employer is obligated to pay for the inoculation.*
- It is also appropriate to train students in using applicable safety precautions and in the use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

In order to ensure the safety of the students, safety training at the school and worksite should include the following:

- Basic first aid
 - Basic safety rules
 - Health and safety hazards
 - Proper use of personal protective equipment
 - Ergonomics
 - Proper handling of hazardous materials
 - Maintaining safe and clean work areas
 - Safe practices with machines and tools
 - [VT Employee Rights](#)
 - Reporting of illnesses, injuries or unsafe conditions
- Sources: [VT Employee Rights](#), [MN DCFL](#), [VOSHA](#)

More Safety Information and Resources

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)

Request for Assistance in Preventing Deaths and Injuries of Adolescent Workers

Career Development Progression

Work-based learning is one element of the larger category of career and college readiness activities, all of which combine to create a lifelong process of career development stretching from preschool through adulthood. There are four broad overlapping stages that most people experience as they develop their careers—awareness, exploration, preparation, and application. WBL activities are designed to help students move through these stages and learn about the world of work and the career options they could pursue.

The Process of Progression in Career Development

Career development is a process just like learning to walk and talk. The stages of career development overlap and are ongoing throughout one's lifetime. The appropriate time for initiating each of the stages of career development for students with disabilities will depend more upon the developmental level vs. the student's grade level. There are certain stages that should be addressed at elementary, at middle school, and high school and beyond.

The progression of career development might look like:

- Awareness of self (abilities and aptitudes)
- Awareness of careers
 - Career awareness/orientation is the first stage of the process and should begin in the early elementary years. This stage really never ends. It is important for this stage to begin early in children's lives so they can develop self-awareness and feelings of self-worth/confidence. This will assist them in: (1) developing a work personality that helps them perceive themselves as workers; (2) becoming more aware of different jobs; (3) developing work values, attitudes and other attributes appropriate to their unique abilities and needs.
- Career exploration (background orientation and preparation for training)
 - **Career exploration** is the second stage of career development. This stage should be emphasized particularly during the middle school years; although it, too, never really ends. During this stage teens should be given a chance to examine firsthand broad occupational groupings such as agricultural work, construction, information technology, public service jobs, business and finance, and manufacturing. They should be allowed to obtain various hands-on experiences, and be given the opportunity to examine their own particular set of abilities and needs, as related to vocational interests, leisure and recreational pursuits, and other roles related to their overall career development.
- Continued career exploration including community-based learning
- Career preparation
 - **Career preparation** represents a third stage of career development. This stage occurs usually during the high school years and finds the student beginning to develop and clarify personal, social and occupational knowledge and skills. Specific interests, aptitudes and competencies of the student should be more clearly delineated in this stage relative to the lifestyle the student desires.

Courses should be selected on this basis so a variety of experiences in and out of the classroom can be provided. A substantial experiential component should characterize this stage of development.

- Career training programs and work experiences designed to prepare students for employment and/or additional training
- Postsecondary training or retraining of persons for gainful employment
- Continual development of transferable and occupational specific skills to result in a satisfying career life
 - Career application and continuing education reflects the opportunity to experience first-hand real work environments. This stage of development requires the direct involvement of employers and community-based organizations providing students with paid and unpaid opportunities in the community. Supported guidance and counseling services will be required. All people change at least somewhat in their interests and goals as they become older.
- Life of work as play

The chart below from the original Vermont Work-Based Learning Manual, provides another mechanism for linking specific WBL activities with the stages of career development at appropriate grade levels. The stages of career development overlap and are ongoing throughout one's lifetime.

		STAGES OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT													
		Grade Levels													
School-to-Work Activities	Pre-K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Applied Academics															
Guest Speakers/Presentations															
Educational Visits/Tours															
Mentoring (School-based)															
Service Learning															
Capstone Project															
Job Shadowing															
Entrepreneurships															
Career Fairs															
Career Workshops															
Interest Inventories															
Career Portfolios															
Unpaid Work Experiences															
Employability Competencies															
Other Paid Work Experiences															
Technical Education Courses															
Mentoring (Work-based)															
Supported Employment															
Skills Certificates															
Student Enterprises															
Student Internships															
Tech Prep															
Cooperative Education															
Student Apprenticeships															
Registered Apprenticeships															

(Source: Adapted from a chart provided by Don Schneider)

Several states have developed a similar framework for a progression of career development from elementary school through high school completion and beyond. Another great example is [Colorado’s Department of Education “The Stages of Career Development”](#). [The American School Counselors National Standards](#) for career development also provide a framework for career development activities that enable students to make a successful transition from school to the world of work, and from job to job across the life span. Following are the three main standards under Career Development:

1. Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions
2. Students will employ strategies to achieve future career goals with success and satisfaction
3. Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work

This model can be found in the Resources section.

Overview of Types of Work-Based Learning Experiences

The following section provides an overview of the various types of work-based learning experiences available for students. Appendix A details considerations that the WBL should give when developing the different experiences for students.

This information was adapted from the 1998 Vermont Work-Based Learning Manual.

[Job Shadowing](#)

Job shadowing is an unpaid experience where a student follows an employer for a short period of time to learn about a particular occupation or industry. This activity helps students explore the world of work and the range of opportunities found within an occupational area.

[Unpaid Work Experience](#)

Students may spend short periods of time in each job and also rotate into related areas. These unpaid placements allow career exploration and provide in-depth knowledge of the day-to-day activities and skills needed to perform a job successfully. It is legal for a student to spend short periods of time in activities learning specific skills, and then spend another short period of time within the same company in a different area, learning a different set of skills. This is to protect the student and maintain her/his status as a trainee. In Vermont, an unpaid work experience opportunity through Career & Technical Education Centers is also known as a Career Work Experience (CWE). Internships are distinguished from other unpaid work experiences due to the fact that they are linked with a specific academic preparation experience.

[Internship](#)

These may be paid or unpaid experiences. Internships are supervised, structured work experiences that involve the practical application of previously studied theory for which school credit is awarded. Many times the internship is a required component of the program. Credit hours and the length of the internship as well as the intensity may vary depending on the course of study. There is a strong emphasis on coordination and integration between worksite and classroom learning.

[Paid Work Experience](#)

The training plan is an agreement between the school, employer, and the student that specifies the occupational skills, employability skills, and the academic standards that the student will achieve in the work experience. It also defines the relationships and responsibilities of all involved, and describes the evaluation process. Student progress in achieving the learning goals

in the training plan is supervised and evaluated collaboratively by appropriate school and worksite personnel. Worksite supervisors/mentors also help students use appropriate workplace skills to resolve real problems. The paid work experience may occur in a public, private, or non-profit organization. Academic credit is usually granted in the subject area included in the training plan. The employer is under no obligation to offer regular employment to the student subsequent to the paid work experience. Both the school and the employer must abide by the Fair Labor Standards Act, child labor laws, and minimum wage laws. Common examples of a structured, paid work-based learning opportunity include youth employment programs supported by the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and paid internships.

Cooperative Work Experience

A Cooperative Work Experience is only available through [Vermont Career and Technical Education \(CTE\) Centers'](#) Cooperative Education Programs. A Cooperative Work Experience must be developed and supervised by a Vermont Agency of Education licensed Cooperative Education/Student Apprenticeship Coordinator ([SBR Subsection 5440-60](#)).

Cooperative Work Experiences are designed to develop specific technical skills required for a specific career path. Participating students need to be enrolled in a state approved [career and technical education program](#) where they learn the theoretical knowledge and technical skills required to enter their chosen career path. The Cooperative Work Experience then allows the student to further develop as well as apply those skills. Types of Cooperative Work Experiences offered through Cooperative Education Programs include the following.

Career Work Experience (CWE) – A CWE is a non-paid work experience (usually up to 30 hours) in which a student participates in a variety of tasks employers might expect from an entry-level employee. Although the student is not paid on a CWE experience, they are treated like an entry-level employee and are expected to behave and act accordingly.

Career Technical Experience (CTE) – A CTE is a long term, paid arrangement where the student is immersed in a work experience in order to learn or refine their skills related to the field they are studying. CTE's require written training plans, identifying specific skills and knowledge the student will develop during the placement. The employer, the student, and the teacher all need to agree on the training plan. Although a CWE experience can be as short as a week or two, they are more commonly a semester or even a yearlong placement. Many co-op students go right into full-time employment at the company they are working for after graduating high school.

Student Apprenticeship

A student apprenticeship is an officially approved partnership between the CTE center, its Regional Advisory Board, and industry partners. As a student apprentice becomes a more formal and dependable participant of business, he/she is able to move from theory into applied practice. The student is exposed to greater knowledge and skill sets which would not be readily available in other venues. Learn more at [V.S.A. Title 16, Chapter 39](#).

[Supported Employment](#)

Supported employment focuses on a person's abilities and provides the supports the individual needs to be successful on a long-term basis. It allows people with disabilities, their families, businesses, and their communities to experience success in the work place. The partnership that supported employment has established between individuals with disabilities and their communities is having a lasting impact on the way the public perceives people with disabilities.

Supported employment is:

- paid, competitive employment, at minimum wage or better;
- designed for students who experience significant challenges to accessing work;
- supported by an employment specialist to obtain and maintain jobs; and
- an opportunity to promote career development and workplace diversity.

The two keys to supported employment are:

An integrated work setting that allows daily contact with non-disabled colleagues and/or the general public.

Competitive employment (i.e. work that is paid on a basis similar to non-disabled co-workers with similar job duties). The wages must be paid in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). The work can be either full-time or part-time. Students who participate in supported employment can connect their work experience to academic standards.

[Apprenticeship](#)

The concept of apprenticeship is long in tradition and is embedded in a full range of occupations in the United States and around the world. In every apprenticed occupation, the apprentice is instructed and supported at the same time he or she works. Student apprenticeship is contextualized learning in a specific career area. In Vermont there are three forms of apprenticeship: Student Apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, and Pre-Apprenticeship programs.

Student Apprenticeship

In 1993, the Vermont State Legislature authorized student apprenticeships as a way of learning academic and technical skills while a student is earning a high school diploma. The statute defines a student apprenticeship program as “a skill-based education program which coordinates and integrates classroom instruction with a structured, work-based learning experience. The individual receives academic instruction and training in a skilled occupation which will prepare the student for postsecondary education, advanced training or direct employment in a position higher than entry level.” A student apprenticeship is not a Registered Apprenticeship which must be registered by the state apprenticeship council under law. A student apprenticeship may, though, lead into a registered apprenticeship. It may be a multi-year program and the curriculum must be approved by the State Board of Education. A student apprenticeship may or may not include financial compensation. In Vermont, a student apprenticeship must be arranged and supervised by a licensed student apprenticeship coordinator. That person is a licensed professional educator whom the State Board of Education finds qualified to plan, implement, and evaluate a student apprenticeship program. In most cases, the local area technical center’s co-op coordinator is also the student apprenticeship coordinator. A student apprenticeship is usually set up when a student wants training in an area not covered by their area’s technical center’s offerings or where there are not enough students to make starting a new technical program feasible. A student apprenticeship may also be created when there are only a few job openings in a specific career area and no formal training programs exist.

Registered Apprenticeship

A Registered Apprenticeship program is sponsored by an employer or, in some cases, a labor union. The Vermont Department of Labor is the “registration agency” and ensures that all program guidelines are met. All Registered Apprenticeship programs must include paid on-the-job training, classroom training called “related instruction”, and a progressively increasing wage scale. Apprentices are hired by the employer and can work part-time if they are high school students. In Vermont, there are registered apprentices in more than 20 different occupations. However, the vast majority are in plumbing, electrical and child care development. The minimum age for participation in Registered Apprenticeship is 16, although some programs require apprentices to be 18. Apprenticeship programs vary in length between 2,000 and 10,000 hours, depending upon the skill level of the occupation.

Pre-Apprenticeship

Pre-apprenticeship means simply a program that teaches basic technical and job readiness skills in preparation to enter a Registered Apprenticeship program. A pre-apprenticeship program can take many forms. A pre-apprenticeship program can provide classroom training and hands-on labs related to an apprenticeship occupation. It can also include paid work experience. The best pre-apprenticeship programs are set up with close collaboration between schools and a Registered Apprenticeship sponsor. Many pre-apprenticeship programs enable students to earn credit toward the completion requirements for a Registered Apprenticeship program.

Related Experience

Service Learning

Service learning is a method of teaching and learning which engages students in solving problems by addressing issues in their schools or greater community as part of their academic education. Service learning involves more than the act of service alone. Each community service experience not only meets an actual community need but is closely linked to a student's classroom learning activities. Effective programs feature carefully structured learning experiences created in partnership with community representatives. Participants receive training and orientation appropriate to the task, pause to reflect on their experiences (verbally and in writing), exercise choices, and develop leadership. The learning experiences are linked to academic standards so that each participating student has clear learning goals.

Service learning experiences differ in length and in level of infusion in a school's curriculum. Projects can last one-day, several days, and some can last as long as a year. Schools utilize this work-based learning experience differently as well. Some sponsor a few activities during the year while others totally infuse this method of learning into their curriculum.

Student Entrepreneurship

Vermont's small businesses are key to the state's well-being. They account for a significant share of the state's economic production and hiring. Small businesses accounted for 61.4% of private-sector jobs in the state and small firms made up 96.5% of the state's employers. (Source: SBA Office of Advocacy, Feb. 2011) Student entrepreneurship is an effective strategy for preparing young people to be successful in that sector of our economy. For many of our students, employment opportunities are with sole proprietorships or with companies with few employees. This situation presents both challenges and opportunities for schools that want to provide work-based learning experiences for their students. The reality is that rural communities may have few well established work-based learning opportunities. Many of our employers can offer only one work-based learning slot at a time.

Student entrepreneurship is a program or activity that takes students through the process of learning what it takes to become a successful small business owner or manager. From a school-to-work standpoint, it represents preparing someone to understand all aspects of running a business and learning about ‘being their own boss.’ Student entrepreneurship may take the form of school-based businesses that students help to set up and run, curricula that guides students through the process of creating business plans, working with local entrepreneurs and other community resources to plan and run enterprises, or any combination of these activities. Entrepreneurship offers students an interdisciplinary experience in understanding small business. Entrepreneurship may be undertaken on or off the school site, but must be part of the school’s course work in order to be considered for academic credit. Students can participate in an entrepreneurship activity at all ages—from kindergarten through college.

The wealth of entrepreneurial talent in Vermont communities is an excellent resource to tap for assistance and hands-on experiences for student entrepreneurship. In rural communities with few large employers, entrepreneurship may offer the best learning opportunities which connect to the world of work. Students experience, reflect, analyze, and apply what they have learned.

Vermont Gold Standards for Work-Based Learning Programs

STANDARD 1	Every high school makes WBL available as part of a program of study leading to college and career readiness.
OBJECTIVES	All state-approved secondary schools make WBL activities available to all students.
	For secondary students with special needs, WBL activities are integrated with their IEP/504/transition plans.
INDICATOR	Each school has identified which WBL activities are offered.
STANDARD 2	A licensed WBL Coordinator facilitates activities as identified in the Vermont Work Based Learning Guide.
OBJECTIVES	WBL Coordinators complete licensing and endorsement requirements through the Agency of Education.
	WBL Coordinators have clearly defined job descriptions and high quality supervision.
INDICATOR	WBL Coordinators demonstrate proficiency and understanding of the Vermont Gold Standards for Work Based Learning and WBL Guide.
STANDARD 3	Employers develop the future workforce through WBL activities.

Employers create opportunities for students to explore possible future employment.

OBJECTIVES	Employers participate in the student proficiency assessment process for long-term WBL activities (i.e. internships and co-op placements).
INDICATOR	Employers can identify benefits from and value their involvement in WBL activities.
STANDARD 4	Students' Personalized Learning plans include WBL opportunities that support students' individual needs, goals and academic proficiency.
OBJECTIVES	Specific learning objectives are identified and assessed for each WBL activity. Students engaged in longer-term WBL activities (i.e. internships and co-op placements) include a training plan that outlines learning objectives.
INDICATOR	Students identify how WBL activities help achieve their learning goals as set forth in their PLPs.
STANDARD 5	WBL activities are coordinated as a continuum of career development.
OBJECTIVE	A career development sequence includes activities related to career awareness, exploration and preparation.
INDICATOR	Schools identify and provide a progression of career development at appropriate age levels.
STANDARD 6	WBL activities are integrated with academic standards.

OBJECTIVES	Employers participate in the student proficiency assessment process for long-term WBL activities (i.e. internships and co-op placements).
OBJECTIVE	Long-term WBL activities (i.e. internships and co-op placements) are aligned with proficiency based graduation requirements.
INDICATOR	Schools identify how WBL activities help students attain academic proficiency. WBL Coordinators oversee development, implementation and documentation of any required training plans with students and employers.
STANDARD 7	WBL activities are utilized as a mechanism to acquire 21st Century Skills for all students to succeed in the workplace.
OBJECTIVE	National educator and employer consortia have defined essential 21st Century Skills necessary for all students to succeed.
INDICATOR	Schools define and measure the acquisition of 21st Century Skills acquired through WBL.
STANDARD 8	WBL activities are compliant with legal, health, and safety regulations.
OBJECTIVES	School districts are responsible for providing adequate insurance and other risk management policies related to WBL activities. Employers are responsible for providing safe, closely supervised work site learning environments
INDICATOR	WBL Coordinators assure that WBL activities meet all relevant legal, health, and safety standards.

Section 1: Schools

The first section outlines the responsibilities that Vermont schools have in ensuring that quality work—based learning opportunities are made available for all students, including those with special needs. It specifies the role that a qualified WBL professional plays in this work and emphasizes the necessity of schools' dedicating trained personnel (either within the school or from an outside partner organization) to coordinate WBL activities in a quality way that meets the needs of each individual student. This section also addresses the importance of conducting a school-wide needs assessment in order to identify gaps and to create a career development plan relative to implementing WBL and it highlights the need for the WBL coordinators' understanding of and proficiency in using the Vermont Gold Standards for Work-Based Learning and the materials incorporated in this Vermont Work-Based Learning Guide.

It is recommended that prior to initiating or structuring any work-based learning program, a needs assessment be conducted in order to identify resources already in place, and those which are needed in order to fill gaps between current conditions and desired outcomes. Needs may be defined as either a desire to improve current performance or to correct a deficiency.

Providing Work-Based Learning Opportunities

School administrators play an important role in cultivating a culture that embraces WBL activities as part of curriculum and standard practice. This includes orienting guidance counselors, teachers, and school board members to understand the importance and benefits of WBL. This also includes providing WBL as an option for students to satisfy graduation requirements earn credit. Without strong administrative, teacher and counselor support, it is impossible to truly integrate WBL into the education system. Schools are responsible for successful outcomes in the following ways:

- Hiring a dedicated, properly credentialed professional, to coordinate work-based learning activities
- Identifying which academic standards can be met effectively through work-based learning
- Identifying how work-based learning fits into sequence of career development for its students
- Providing the physical space within which WBL activities take place
- Providing internal staff dedicated to facilitating WBL activities, or work with external organizations to provide WBL activities to students

- Providing professional development opportunities for all staff that are involved in WBL activities
- Developing a budget and identifying funds and other resources to support WBL activities
- Making students, parents and staff aware of WBL activities and benefits
- Assigning students credit for successfully completing and demonstrating proficiency through WBL activities
- Integrating WBL activities into the school culture, including keeping parents engaged and informed
- Ensuring that WBL coordinators work closely with special educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities

Fostering Interest in Work-Based Learning

Parents

Parents can be either enthusiastic supporters or suspicious opponents of school-to-work activities. Work-based learning without parental involvement may not be focused on student needs; planners should heed parents' concerns. Select engagement strategies that match your district's current status with school-to-work activities and build from that point.

Strategies for working successfully with parents include the following:

- Ask parents their concerns, and respond to them.

Be ready to respond to typical concerns of parents, such as: Is school-to-work another form of tracking? Will college options still be open to my child? Will my child be forced into making a career choice too early? What sort of job will he or she be doing? Will transportation be made available between the school and the workplace? Is my child still getting the basics?

- Involve parents in work-based learning design and ongoing operations.

Parent-teacher organizations can be a good venue for recruitment and orientation.

- Invite parents to visit the people and institutions connected with work-based learning opportunities.

Making it possible for parents to visit the school as well as businesses and organizations where their children will be learning can help them better understand the nature of work-based learning experiences. Providing opportunities for parents to meet the supervisors and teachers on an informal basis gives them the chance to discuss their concerns and interests with the people who will be working with their children.

- Have parents sign a mutual expectations agreement.

Being party to an agreement with employers, teachers and their child can enlist parents in reinforcing their child's learning.

- Stress the guidance and career planning components of school-to-work when marketing to parents.

Students often complain that no one at school cares about them as individuals. Stressing to parents that special supports will be provided to help students negotiate the demands of work-based learning and make decisions about future education and career goals will help demonstrate to parents that your efforts are not business as usual. Help parents see the long term benefits that thoughtful, coordinated planning will provide for their children.

- Begin early.

Parents are usually enthusiastic about career awareness and job-shadowing opportunities at the elementary or junior high school levels. Starting all children in career- focused activities early on can lessen the chance that work-based learning activities will be labeled by parents as unnecessary or ancillary once students reach the high school level.

- Work with community-based organizations.

Community-based organizations are often a voice and advocate for parents. Working with these organizations can be a vehicle for parent communication.

School Staff

Orientation and ongoing staff development activities empower teachers and counselors to adopt new practices that connect school and work. The goals of orientation and staff development activities are to help teachers and counselors become WBL advocates. This also builds a supportive peer network through which school staff can work together to develop new teaching materials and strategies and reinforce each other's efforts.

- Provide a formal orientation and resources.

A formal introduction to work-based learning will help articulate goals, expectations, support structures, and teacher and counselor roles and responsibilities, and provide an opportunity to address staff concerns.

- Bring teachers and counselors into the design process.

Unless they have an opportunity to influence the design process, it is unlikely that they will be WBL advocates.

- Link goals to concerns that teachers and counselors have identified.

Make it clear that the goals are consistent with concerns raised by staff about student performance, efficient operation of the school, professional development and support, and preparing students for the world at large.

- Educate teachers and counselors about the changing demands of the workplace and the range of postsecondary options.

Help them better understand the academic, social, and technical demands of modern work and the range of career and learning opportunities in the community by providing opportunities to visit the workplace and meet with worksite staff.

- Enlist current participants from other schools.

Teachers and counselors often become more interested when they hear the enthusiasm of their peers and their students.

- Provide staff support.

Staff involvement can be supported by arranging visits to other schools that have implemented WBL activities; supporting attendance at career development or related conferences; providing time for teachers and counselors to meet with peers on issues of curriculum for work-based learning; and supplying concrete examples and results of integrating school-based and work-based learning.

- Consider developing summer internships and job-shadowing days in industry for school staff.

Employer sponsored internships are a popular and proven technique for giving firsthand exposure to academic, social, and technical demands of today's workplace. Utilize existing Vermont models such as the Upper Valley Business & Education Partnership's Summer Externship Program.

* Adapted from [*Business/Employer Partnerships - "Connecting Youth to Work-Based Learning," MN DCFL, 2003.*](#)

Benefits to Schools

Schools that assume these responsibilities are far more likely to have students successfully experience the full benefits of engaging in WBL. The benefits are considerable and include the following.

- Providing a way for students to gain career and college readiness skills
- Enhancing the ability to meet the needs of diverse student populations
- Providing opportunities for individualized curriculum and student-led learning
- Strengthening school's relationship with the community
- Contributing to staff professional development
- Making education more relevant and valuable for students
- Enhancing student retention
- Increasing student motivation to learn by developing their talent and interest areas

Coordinated by Qualified Professionals

- Planning should be built on best practices and take advantage of programs with a track record of success.

If your district is already doing community service work, start there. If co-op career and technical education is already working, expand from that point. To find out what is already in place, districts can survey and then compile a simple database of work-based learning opportunities, staff responsible, employers engaged, and students involved. Often there are more work-based learning opportunities going on than most people realize. By starting with an accurate picture of your baseline, you will have completed the first step in the development and implementation of a high quality, sustainable plan.

- Planning is essential in creating good work-based learning opportunities.

Successful planning discussions often begin with these two questions: "Why are we doing this?" and "How will work-based learning help students meet academic standards and acquire 21st century skills". One answer is that work-based learning is a wonderful opportunity for schools to involve the whole community in the exciting task of effectively preparing all students for career and college success. Communities can help schools expand the walls of their classrooms to enable students to access high-quality applied learning environments that support deep and connected learning.

- It can be very helpful to develop a local advisory team responsible for planning and implementing work-based learning.

Consider establishing an advisory team, comprised of committed individuals from business, labor, community agencies, legal and other professional fields, parents, students and teachers, to assist with planning and implementing WBL. Broad representation from the community

can make the difference between success and failure. Ask your regional workforce partnership or other organizations committed to helping youth prepare for adulthood for assistance and support. Give members real tasks and responsibilities. Empower this team with the authority and resources to develop a vision and make it a reality.

- Become knowledgeable about what others are doing.

Gather information about successful work-based learning opportunities and observe good practices in action; then incorporate what you can into your own plans and activities. Collaborate with other schools or districts in your region. Be open and willing to share both successes and missed opportunities. Although it is important that districts develop materials that meet their own needs, it is also important to recognize the value of standardizing procedures and forms. Standardization minimizes confusion and maximizes consistency, especially with worksites that participate in work-based learning with several educational organizations.

Implementation

- Classroom Activities: Supporting Work-Based Learning Experiences

Successful work-based learning activities enable students to explore their career interests and develop new skills. The following tools may help students in this process:

- Skills and aptitude tests
- Career information systems
- Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC), on-line tools
- Department of Labor, labor market information
- Personal and vocational self-awareness activities
- Identified Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are an essential part of a work-based activity and include the specific skills to be learned on the job and in the classroom. The objectives to be achieved through a WBL experience should be mutually developed by the coordinator, the student, and the employer and should:

- individualize each student's objectives based on his/her educational and career goals and interests;
- outline each student's tasks, duties and responsibilities; and
- be specific, achievable, and measurable.

Connecting WBL to the Classroom

The work-based learning coordinator collaborates with classroom teachers to facilitate connections between students' work-based learning experiences and their classroom work and assignments. The coordinator may:

- meet with teachers to discuss what they see as the connections between classroom learning and worksite learning; and
- develop joint activities that enhance learning in both the classroom and the workplace.

Classroom seminars can provide students with the opportunity to gain insights into the culture and environment of work, reinforce the connections between classroom content and work related learning, and discuss common job-related experiences. Seminars may include the following:

- Peer interaction and discussion of job-related concerns and problems
- Opportunities to share successful experiences from the worksite
- Projects that provide students the opportunity to gather, evaluate and report information, both individually and in teams
- Interactive media presentations and accessing on-line information
- Assignments that include keeping journals, preparing research papers, or developing a personal portfolio
- Guest speakers and panels that provide additional opportunities for students to question and interact with employers

Developing Work-Based Learning Sites

Developing appropriate worksite placements for students is critical to the success of each work-based learning activity.

- Research Employers
- Gather as much information about potential employers as you can through personal contacts and professional organizations.
- Network with your friends and co-workers and ask for contacts within the organizations.
- Utilize on-line employer listings and directories.
- Connect with other organizations and agencies. Personnel in organizations such as the Department of Labor, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, youth services agencies, and other community-based organizations have experience in working with employers in your area. Ask them if they can identify employers willing to host students.
- Contact local business organizations such as chambers of commerce, trade associations, Rotary clubs, and others.
- Have Effective and Consistent Communication

Effective communication is the foundation for developing and maintaining work-based learning sites. Most employers will prefer to have a single point of contact to maintain and develop a relationship with schools.

- Call employers.
 - It is always best to have the name of an individual within a company to call. If you don't have a name, ask for the name of the person who might be responsible for this type of activity. You may be referred to the human resources or personnel department, especially in large organizations.
- Prepare a phone conversation script that has all the information you'll need to give an employer.
 - Introduce yourself and ask for some time to discuss work-based learning opportunities. Explain your needs clearly and concisely. Emphasize the benefits of participation. When preparing your script, pretend that you are the employer. What would you want to know first (e.g., liability, time commitment, paperwork, costs)? What would make you listen to what you have to say (e.g., concern for the well-being of young people, benefits for the company)? Solicit questions and immediate concerns from the employer. If possible, set up a meeting time for further discussion.
- Confirm arrangements by e-mail or phone call.
- Meet the worksite staff in person.
- Bring written material (e.g. business cards, fliers, letters of introduction, brochures, agreement forms, newsletters, annual reports).
- Practice professionalism.
 - When meeting with the employer, follow the same interview guidelines you teach your students. Know your material. Listen well. Utilize good communication skills. Respect the employer's time. Wear dress appropriate to that workplace.
- Conduct the meeting in a place where interruptions are minimal.
 - Give a brief explanation of your needs. Include information about the type and age of students involved. Use the meeting to learn about the worksite and the industry. Do more listening than talking. Allow time for questions.
- Emphasize the benefits of participation.
 - Benefits can fulfill needs or solve problems. Potential benefits for employers depend on the type of activity in which they participate. Some possible benefits to employers include access to motivated part-time personnel, reduction in training costs, opportunities to observe possible candidates for full-time jobs, and

the satisfaction of knowing that they are taking an active role in improving the community.

- Get the commitment.
 - Specifically ask for what you want—participation and support. Be honest and clear about your expectations. Employers do not like surprises.
- Prepare and sign written agreements where applicable.
 - Make sure that all involved parties understand work-based learning expectations and responsibilities. Employers appreciate having things spelled out. Longer term work experiences (i.e. internships, co-op placements) require formal training agreements signed by all parties. Less formal experiences (e.g. job shadows) can use simple checklists or outlines.
- Provide written material that spells out employer responsibilities.
 - Thank the employer in writing for agreeing to participate and outline his/her roles and responsibilities.

Connect Students With Worksites

- Establish an application process for the purpose of matching.
 - This process will help the work-based learning coordinator learn about the student and make appropriate matches with worksites to ensure that the work-based learning experience addresses the student's interests, needs, strengths, and goals.
- Match participants with worksites.
 - Site supervisors will want to participate in the selection of the students they will be working with, especially if they are providing a paid work-based learning experience. They will want to select individuals who are compatible with their staff and work activities. Arrange student interviews with site supervisors and allow them to select, whenever possible, the students to be placed in their worksites. Have students prepare resumes, applications, and cover letters. Employers may request these materials prior to or during an interview.

Follow Up

- Call or visit with the student's site supervisor.
 - The amount of contact depends upon the type of activity. For activities that last less than a day, like job shadows or observations, a follow-up call or e-mail is usually appropriate. Longer activities such as cooperative education placements, internships, and student apprenticeships require ongoing contact between school and worksite staff.
- Use follow-up contacts to check on a range of issues.

- Discuss student participation and progress to concerns or problems. Ask informal, open-ended questions to help elicit information from the site supervisor about the experience.
- Provide an evaluation form to be completed by the site supervisor.
 - Evaluation forms should focus on the student's participation as well as the employer's impression of the activity and how it could be improved. The student's evaluation can be included in his/her portfolio or as part of a written report.

Sustaining Employer Relationships

- Have the student send a thank you note to the employer.
 - Encourage students to personalize their notes by highlighting at least one thing that they learned or enjoyed during the experience. Suggest that students ask permission to use the employer as a reference.
 - Send a thank you note from the school as well.
 - We all like to know that we are appreciated. Keep small note cards and envelopes on hand. A short, personal, handwritten note is often more valued than a formal letter or e-mail.
- Other ways to say thanks:
 - Give certificates of appreciation.
 - Conduct award or recognition ceremonies.
 - Highlight the employer's participation in an article in newsletters or local papers.
 - Give small, inexpensive gifts such as pens or note pads with the school name.
 - Staying in touch

Stay in touch with employers. They'll be more inclined to work with you if you have a good, ongoing relationship.

- Create an employer database.
 - Document all employers and the activities in which they've participated for future reference. Maintain a mailing list of organizations that are active in work-based learning. This database should also include the names of individual students who have worked with each organization. Recalling the experiences of past participants can be helpful when placing new students.
- Take time to reflect on your site development process.
 - Identify strengths and weaknesses in your presentation and make adjustments as necessary. Ask employers for input on how marketing efforts could be

improved. Focus on streamlining the site development process for the benefit of everyone involved.

Assess Student Learning

Student progress and performance are measured by the degree to which students meet the learning objectives outlined in their personal learning plan. The assessment process should document student learning, identify strengths and weaknesses, and provide strategies for improvement. Various tools used in assessment include portfolios, supervisor or employer evaluations, performance at the worksite, student self-evaluations, and coordinator/instructor evaluations. If credit is awarded, the assessment process may also provide a basis for grading. Students find it useful to document their experiences, skills, and accomplishments. A student portfolio containing this information can serve as an ongoing assessment tool as well as a “living” transcript.

Work-based learning portfolios may include the following:

- Reflective journals
- Work samples
- Research projects
- Learning logs
- Activity summaries
- Culminating project or other performance assessment summaries

Evaluation of progress and review of student objectives may be accomplished through regular visits by the coordinator/instructor to the worksite and conferences with the student’s employer/supervisor.

The following guidelines help make visits more productive:

- Set up a visit in advance with the employer
- Have a systematic and organized plan for the visit; develop questions ahead of time
- Arrange periodically for the student, the employer, and the coordinator/teacher to meet together to discuss the student’s progress
- Discuss the needs of the student and those of the employer
- Discuss student progress, as well as any appropriate changes in the employment situation or related instruction
- Let employers know that they can request a confidential conference

Record keeping is necessary in order to:

- gather information for assessing and placing students;
- provide a basis for student grades;
- assist with goal setting and portfolio development;

- provide information or statistics to those involved in work-based learning;
- document authorizations or expenditures; and
- document employer participation.

Software programs are available to make it easier to computerize these records, generate comparative data, and produce a variety of reports. Seek out programs designed specifically for work-based learning or job placement. Check with district technical support staff to determine which programs are appropriate. It is important that forms are approved by the appropriate school personnel to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The types of forms necessary will vary based on local needs.

Assess Program Effectiveness

Successful work-based learning opportunities require on-going review and evaluation. A well-planned evaluation will provide the opportunity to analyze results that will be useful for making changes or improvements in the program. A detailed description of program evaluation can be found in the Evaluation section of the WBL Manual.

Section 2: Employers

This section is about the employer and the integral part they play in any work-based learning program. For a quality program to exist, employers must be committed to the program and demonstrate a willingness to work with the school and WBL coordinator. They should also understand how to assess student performance in long-term WBL activities. This section also outlines best practices for employers to supervise youth.

Employer Responsibilities

The primary role of the employer is to provide an environment in which learning can take place. The employer and the worksite supervisor must understand the goals of the WBL program and the training plan goals for individual students. In general, the employer is responsible for the following:

- Providing a work experience that supports the student's educational and career goals
- Providing a dedicated staff professional to work one-on-one with the student
- Working with the WBL coordinator and the student to create a training agreement
- Orienting students to the worksite: business operations, performance expectations, relevant policies and job specific safety training
- Following all federal and state child labor laws
- Following all federal and state employment laws
- Facilitating student exposure to all aspects of the field
- Informing staff of the student's purpose and enlisting their support and help
- Assisting the student in his/her efforts to accomplish personal and professional goals outlined in a personal learning plan
- Providing worker's compensation for the student for all paid hours worked
- Paying at least the state minimum wage for hours worked by the student (for paid experiences) unless student qualifies for an exception to the minimum wage laws in which case documentation must be completed and on file
- Meeting with the school-based coordinator during the term to assess student progress and address problems that arise
- Completing formal evaluations of student work at the worksite

Employer Benefits

Identifying and recruiting businesses/employers is an on-going process. Employers need to be encouraged and rewarded. A great deal of collaboration must occur between the WBL coordinator and employer. This relationship must be fostered and maintained. The employers will need to understand how they will benefit from their involvement in a WBL program. Benefits employers are likely to receive include the following:

- A new pool of potential employees who will understand the needs and expectations of the workplace
- An effective way to connect with local educators and provide opportunities for students
- Improved employee morale through student workplace learning (e.g., employees take pride in supervising a young person who in turn may improve their work performance)
- A way to provide a community service

Business/Employer and School Partnership Expectations

While there are many types of WBL activities, it is important that the employer, school, and students are aware of the expectations. For example, with longer-term WBL activities, incorporating the following criteria will help ensure both students and employers have a valuable experience:

- The employer provides orientation to the business/worksite and safety instruction
- The employer provides the student training on processes, procedures and use of equipment
- A well-designed individual training plan that comprises tasks which are progressively more complex and difficult in nature, developed collaboratively with the employer, educators, and WBL coordinator
- The duties and tasks which the student will learn and perform require problem solving
- A student is exposed to “all aspects of an industry” from planning, management, finances, technical and production skills, technology, health and safety issues, and the variety of occupations contained within business or industry
- Workplace skills and transferable skills are included in the training plan
- A supervisor, who is a positive role model, is assigned to the student at the worksite
- The worksite connects to the work-based seminar and other classroom instruction

* Adapted from [Business/Employer Partnerships - “Connecting Youth to Work-Based Learning,” MN DCFL, 2003](#)

Basic Strategies for Employers to Supervise Youth

Get to know the young person by asking the student about their career dreams, goals, hobbies, strengths, limits, and needs.

- Provide training and emphasize safety and health at all times.
- Young people are often not aware of the dangers in the workplace. They need initial training and ongoing reminders.
- Young people need to learn how to make informed decisions.
 - Provide the student opportunities to make some decisions regarding their work-based experience.
- Teach the young person about workplace culture.
- Young people need to learn about an employer's rules, customs, and standards.
 - Supervisors should encourage a student's curiosity, invite questions, and allow for exploration opportunities.
- Be a positive role model.
- Young people are easily influenced by what is occurring around them.
 - The supervisor should use proper techniques and practices (especially safety), respectful language and avoid all types of harassment at all times.
- Be clear and straightforward with directions and instructions.
- Supervisors should give the "what," "why," and "how" of newly assigned tasks while holding the student responsible for the outcome.
- Advise youth on career directions and opportunities.
 - When at a worksite, the student observes the realities of the workplace first-hand. This is an ideal opportunity for the supervisor to share what knowledge and skills are required in a particular career field.

* [Thuli, K.J., and Hong, E. \(1998\). Employer Toolkit, Washington, DC: National Transition Alliance for Youth with Disabilities, Academy for Education Development.](#)

Student Safety

The importance of ensuring the safety of each student during a WBL activity is crucial to the success of the program. All activities from worksite field trips to service learning to paid work-experience must be monitored and students must be protected at all times. There are several types of work that are potentially hazardous to young people. These include: working in or around motor vehicles; working near electrical hazards; working in retail and service businesses where there is a risk of robbery-related hazards; working on ladders, scaffolds, roofs or construction sites; working around cooking appliances; continuous manual lifting and lifting of heavy objects; and operating tractors and other heavy equipment. The WBL coordinator must be familiar with laws pertaining to hazardous occupations. (A detailed list and link to Child

Labor Laws related to hazardous occupations is provided in the Legal, Health & Safety section of the manual.)

Preventing hazards and accidents is the joint responsibility of the WBL coordinator, the employer, the supervisor, and the student. Prior to students engaging in an activity at the site, the WBL coordinator surveys the potential risks for students. The WBL coordinator monitors the site throughout the experience and addresses basic safety rules in the school-based curriculum.

The employer is responsible for maintaining a safe work environment, eliminating hazards, training students to recognize hazards and use safe work practices, complying with child labor laws, evaluating equipment, and providing appropriate supervision. The student's immediate supervisor is responsible for monitoring the safety of the student and instructing the student when the need arises.

Each student is responsible for taking steps to protect him or herself. They should know their rights, participate in training programs, recognize the potential for injury at work, ask questions, and follow safe work practices.

Best Practices Checklist for Worksite Selection

- Develop a checklist of items to look for when evaluating a worksite.
- Explore the interest level the employer has for participating in a WBL program.
- Interview employees at the worksite. Find out if potential worksite supervisors exist.
- Assess the capacity of the worksite supervisor and employer to meet the needs of the student.
- Find out about the suitability of occupations for young people.
- Learn about opportunities for the development of progressive training plans including possible advancement. (This should include a variety of tasks for students to develop competencies.)
- Obtain a copy of the employer's liability insurance including workers' compensation when required.
- Identify training and safety needs and who is responsible for training.
- Verify that wages are aligned with the local prevailing wage.
- Verify that employer is in compliance with federal and state laws including child labor laws.
- Obtain a copy of the worksite employee handbook, if available.
- Determine if any accessibility concerns are present.

Section 3: Students

The focus of this section is the student and the intention that the student be at the center of work-based learning and derive the maximum benefits from it. Standard 4 relates to meeting student needs so that they will clearly understand the relevance of the experience. Standards 5, 6 and 7 address direct connections to a developmental sequence of career development, academic standards, and essential 21st century skills - those fundamental abilities required for success in college and careers going forward.

Tailored Work-Based Learning Activities

Student Responsibilities

The student is the primary beneficiary of WBL activities. High quality experiences during middle and high school should support every student in making better decisions about their future based on real opportunities to make connections between school and careers. Students are responsible for successful outcomes in the following ways:

- Developing goals/objectives for a personal learning plan connected to academic standards
- Taking ownership of the learning experience, which includes participation in activities at a worksite as well as in school
- Completing skill, aptitude, and interest assessments related to WBL activities
- Completing assignments, evaluations, forms, and other activities necessary for program completion
- Signing and abiding by specific agreements/forms, such as a formal work-based learning training agreement
- Making satisfactory academic progress
- Informing the school-based coordinator of any problems that occur at the worksite

Student Benefits

Students that assume these responsibilities are far more likely to successfully experience the full benefits of engaging in WBL. The benefits are considerable and include:

- Apply classroom learning to real world settings
- Achieve Common Core and other academic standards through WBL activities
- Establish a clear connection between education and work
- Identify and analyze personal needs, interests, and abilities
- Identify and analyze potential opportunities in various career fields
- Make decisions and plans to achieve goals and aspirations

- Develop outlines of potential career paths
- Increase self-confidence
- Improve post-graduation job prospects
- Practice positive work habits and attitudes
- Understand the expectations of the workplace
- Develop an increased motivation to stay in school
- Make direct connections with adult role models and mentors
- Establish professional contacts for future employment and mentoring

Student Selection Process

A well-defined process for selecting students is needed for a quality WBL program. Defining the process is an excellent task for a program advisory committee. The use of a student selection process demonstrates the program's integrity, quality and high expectations.

Following are student selection criteria for consideration:

4. Minimum age
5. Minimum school attendance percentage
6. Written application
7. Demonstration of regard for school policy and community laws
8. Completion of a vocation interest/ability inventory
9. Parent/guardian support and approval
10. Agreement to follow and be responsible for all employment policies
11. Drug screening and/or criminal background check if required by employer

Students with disabilities often excel in appropriate WBL activities. The importance of the WBL coordinator working with special education teachers to identify students and develop an individualized training plan cannot be emphasized enough. A substantial amount of documentation is required for students who have an IEP or a 504 plan.

* Adapted from [MN Work-Based Learning Manual](#)

Evaluation of Work-Based Learning

Evaluation is actually a specific form of research which focuses on a particular program's normal operations, without control groups or peer review. It is usually paid for by the organization in which it is taking place, without a goal of benefiting people or communities other than those from whom the data are collected. Lessons learned through integrating evaluation into program design are difficult to capture through any other means. In that sense, program evaluation is the collection and dissemination of feedback, conducted simultaneously with and in support of program design.

The American Evaluation Association recently updated its Program Evaluation Standards ([Program Evaluation Documents](#)) Yarbrough, D. B., Shulha, L. M., Hopson, R. K., and Caruthers, F. A. (2011). **The program evaluation standards: A guide for evaluators and evaluation users** (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Work based learning programs may be required to evaluate the effectiveness of their work using specific methods as defined by agencies, sponsors or funders. However, when there are no specific guidelines, program developers may turn to resources published by the United States Department of Education. Among these are the following.

[Work Based Learning Toolkit](#)

Following, a few of the more common concepts used in program evaluation are described in more detail.

Summative and Formative Evaluation

Summative (end product) evaluation is an important piece of any project, and often actually required by funders. It helps to answer questions like, "How many students took part?" "How many businesses were visited?" "How many staff hours were used?" Summative evaluation helps to answer questions about total impact and total resources used, which can lead to changes being made the next time the program is offered. "We used large groups throughout, with mixed results. Let's try a few small groups next year."

But instituting a strong formative evaluation can capture sudden "ah-ha!" moments and lead to mid-course corrections, potentially making a difference for participants currently taking part in the program. Formative questions center around what is happening now, what is working well and what isn't. It can be as easy as a quick "check in" question. "What worked better for you

today, large or small group work?" "Let's use small groups again tomorrow!"

Needs Assessment/Goal Setting

Prior to initiating or restructuring a work-based learning program, a needs assessment should be conducted in order to identify resources already in place, as well as those identified to fill gaps between current conditions and desired outcomes. The "needs" that are assessed can be defined broadly, both as resources to improve current performance, and those which will turn the program's focus in new directions.

Examples of needs assessments are found at ([North Dakota Public Instruction](#)). Action Research or Contextual Research is an evaluation conducted by program staff as a natural part of the program. It is generally cyclical, with results analyzed and changes implemented by those who deliver the program that is being evaluated. This "learning by doing" approach leads to improved performance, generally with a very specific question as the focus of the work. Staff work together to define the question, design evaluation data collection and analysis efforts, and share their findings.

See ([Rory O'Brien Research Papers](#)) for examples of action research.

Data Collection – Quantitative/Qualitative/Mixed Methods

Quantitative researchers most often deal with numbers, and like to begin with a hypothesis which they prove or dis-prove mathematically. Whereas qualitative researchers' findings are more often built from the ground up through field observations, interviews, or personal narrative, and in some cases lead to a theory which may then be tested quantitatively. Likewise, quantitative researchers may see results in their data that are puzzling until they get out in the field to observe, qualitatively, aspects leading to further explanation of the results. When an evaluation uses both qualitative and quantitative data it is a "mixed-methods" evaluation. Mixed methods evaluations are actually increasing in popularity, and can be argued to result in the most trustworthy findings.

360°

Many organizations use a "360" approach to evaluation. The theory being that all stakeholder groups involved in a program have knowledge of, and deserve a voice in, the process of evaluating (valuing) it. In reality this approach will lead to lots of good information, while collecting and analyzing that information is also time consuming. It is not necessary to ask everyone in the organization a question that only impacts full-time staff, for instance. However, if the question being asked is broad enough to impact the program as a whole, or policy relating to it, 360-degree evaluation should be considered.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

If your focus is the entire organization, then a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis may be what you are looking for. In fact, SWOT is often the first step in developing a strategic plan. For examples of SWOT for non-profits see ([SWOT Strategic Planning Analysis Toolkit](#)).

Tools of Evaluation

Free, online survey tools make it possible for programs to reach their stakeholders online through live links embedded in websites or email, or in printed formats. However be warned, the quality of information gained from any survey tool will only be as good as the thought put into designing the instrument. When it comes to design, Don A. Dillman's seminal guides, the newest being Internet, Mail, and Mixed-Mode Surveys, are essential reading.

Involved statistical analysis can be accomplished with software like [SPSS](#) and [SAS](#). Likewise qualitative tools such as [NVivo](#) and [Atlas](#) provide a technological solution for the tedium of text, tape, and video analysis. Free samples from the websites allow you to explore the software before purchasing. But before running out to buy anything, talk with other programs to learn what they are using, how they like it and what advice they can offer.

Resources

[Framework for 21st Century Career Skills](#)

[Common Core Standards English Language Arts Standards » Anchor Standards » College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading](#)

[VT Standards \(Best Practices see section 8/5\)](#)

[National Academy Foundation \(NAF\) Career Academy Models](#)

[Instructional Strategies in the NAF Curriculum](#)

[NAF Best Practices for High School Internships](#)

[NAF Ready for Career Readiness in the Common Core - Huffington Post](#)

[Resources for Setting Up Work-based Learning](#)

[Minnesota Work Based Learning Manual](#)

[Colorado Department of Education, Special Education Services Unit](#)

[New Ways to Work Employer Toolkit](#)

[The Stages of Career Development, Colorado Dept. of Education, Special Education Services Unit](#)

[Tony Wagner's Seven Survival Skills](#)

Links to Federal Information

- [US Department of Labor Fair Labor Standards Act Adviser](#)
- [YouthRules!](#) was launched by the U.S. Department of Labor in May 2002 to increase public awareness of Federal and State rules concerning young workers. Through the [YouthRules!](#) Initiative the U.S. Department of Labor and its partners seek to promote positive and safe work experiences that help prepare young workers to enter the 21st Century workforce.
- Resources for Students: [Know the Rules](#)
- Resources for Employers, Parents & Educators: [For Employers, Parents, & Educators](#)

APPENDIX A

Types of Work-Based Learning

- **Job Shadowing** - An unpaid experience where a student follows an employer for a short period of time (a few hours to an entire day) to learn about a particular occupation or industry.
- **Unpaid Work Experience** - An unpaid work experience is a limited-term opportunity, longer than a job shadow, for students to learn about a particular occupation or industry by working at a specific workplace.
- **Internship** - Student internships are situations where students work for an employer for a specified period of time to learn about a particular industry or occupation. Student's workplace activities may include special projects, a sample of tasks from different jobs, or tasks from a single occupation.
- **Paid Work Experience** - A structured paid work experience is a competency-based, educational experience which occurs at the work site and is tied to a student's curriculum. The experience is guided by a training plan which coordinates and integrates a student's school-based instruction with a work site experience.
- **Cooperative Work Experience** - a program of work experience in an actual employment setting related to the vocational interests and educational programs provided to a student at an area vocational/technical education center. A Student Apprenticeship is a more structured Cooperative Work Experience.
- **Supported Employment** - Enables students with disabilities to gain paid employment where they are supported by an employment specialist to obtain and maintain the job who have not been successfully employed to work and contribute to society.
- **Apprenticeship** - An agreement through which the apprentice gains instruction and support in exchange for work. The apprentice learns with masters of the trade, craft, or profession and begins an occupational career while contributing to the productivity of the enterprise. Youth 16 and older can enroll as a pre-Apprentice.
- **Service Learning** – A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities.
- **Student Entrepreneurship** – A student entrepreneur is a student who starts a company or non-profit while still attending school.

WBL Category	Student Grades	Benefits	Approximate Time	Skill Attainment
Job Shadowing	9-12	Offers student exposure to work situations, engages employers and motivates learners	2 hrs	low
Unpaid Work Experience	9-12	Offers students a structured work experience and allows schools and employers to come together with a common goal		moderate
Internship	11-12	Offers students a more intense career area focus with the opportunity to earn school credit	summers	moderate
Paid Work Experience	11-12	Offers students a structured experience that provides specialized learning with compensation		moderate
Coop Work Experience (incl. Student Apprenticeship)	11-12	Offers students a rigorous work experience that can include credit and advanced standing		substantial
Supported Employment	11-12	Offers students assistance in seeking employment that results in wages and possible academic credit		moderate
Apprenticeship	11-12	Offer students a Bureau of Apprenticeship Training sanctioned program that leads to widely recognized credentials, has pay structure, and continues post high school		high
Service Learning	9-12	Offers students an opportunity to gain volunteerism		moderate

WBL Category	Student Grades	Benefits	Approximate Time	Skill Attainment
		experience and connect with the community		
Student Entrepreneurship	9-12	Offers students an opportunity to create an individualized entrepreneurship plan and carry out the work self-directed		substantial

Developing the Experience

Listed below by work-based learning type are activities for school work-learning leaders.

Job Shadowing

Identify Student Interests, Develop Business Contacts, Prepare Students, Prepare Employers

[Unpaid Work Experience](#)

Create a Database of Possible Employers, Meet with Potential Students, Meet with the Employer, Prepare an Education/Training Plan (where applicable), Ensure Proper Insurance Coverage, Create a File, Review Progress, Evaluation and Reflection, Follow Up

[Internship](#)

Identify Potential Worksites, Choose an Internship Supervisor, Place Students, Arrange Schedules, Prepare Student Interns, Prepare Worksite Supervisors, Evaluation and Reflection

[Paid Work Experience](#)

Identify a School-based Coordinator, Identify Potential Students, Develop Job Sites, Prepare Worksite Supervisors

[Coop Work Experience](#)

Identify Potential Worksites, Place Students, Arrange Schedules, Prepare Students, Prepare Worksite Supervisors

[Supported](#) Employment

Assess the Student, Skills Training, Job Site Development, Follow-up Support, Transition Planning, Implement the Transition from School to Work, Vocational Rehabilitation Transition Counselors

[Apprenticeship](#)

Identify Potential Student Apprentices, Recruit a Business Partner, Draft a Student Apprenticeship Plan, Obtain Approval for the Student Apprenticeship Plan, Prepare Students, Prepare the Employer, Implement the Plan, Ongoing Monitoring and Student Evaluation, Evaluation and Reflection

[Related Service Learning](#)

Identify Potential Sites, Place Students, Arrange Schedules, Confirm Plans, Prepare Students, Prepare Field Site Supervisors

Related Experience Student Entrepreneurship

Secure Support, Identify Student Interests, Prepare Teachers, Develop Business Contacts, Develop the Curriculum, Reflection and Evaluation

Key to Preparing Students

Educational links - The teacher or coordinator determines the learning objectives and links to the academic standards. The work experience should enable a student to achieve the competencies of the particular program in which they are enrolled.

Education agreements - These agreements outline the responsibilities of the worksite supervisor, the student, and the education coordinator. The forms should be carefully reviewed by parents, the instructor, and signed by all. As part of these agreements, a training plan is developed and attached. The training plan outlines the goals and activities of the experience. The list should include skills the student needs to acquire and/or practice and concepts the student needs to understand and apply. Goals and objectives should relate directly to classroom work and career development activities which the work experience supports.

Dress and behavior expectations - While classroom preparation for career exploration activities usually covers this information, work-based experiences offer a great opportunity to reinforce the message that dress and behavior standards in the workplace are different than those at school. Remind students that they are representing the school as well as themselves. The coordinator should be aware of dress codes at each worksite and discuss appropriate attire with students.

Follow-up - Meet with students on and off the worksite to inquire as to their satisfaction with the experience. Asking specific questions related to the training plan will provide insight relative to the need for in-school or on-site training and need for employer contact.

Key to Preparing Employers

There are many legal issues that worksite supervisors need to be aware of, such as safety concerns and child labor, discrimination, and sexual harassment laws. Make sure that worksite supervisors understand their legal responsibilities and potential liabilities in advance. For unpaid experiences, all parties need to be aware of federal guidelines related to unpaid work experience/training. School personnel should ensure that all participating students are covered by accident insurance.

Many professionals are unaccustomed to the unique challenges of communicating and working with young people. Remind worksite supervisors that they may be faced with student attitudes and expectations that may seem unrealistic in the workplace. Encourage hosts to provide as many active learning experiences as possible, and to be direct in their communication of needs and expectations. Similarly, employers should be reminded that encouragement is a valuable training tool that will often increase student performance and motivation for job duties.

Remind worksite supervisors that the purpose is to provide students with an environment where learning can take place. Encourage supervisors to allow students to participate in as many learning activities as possible, including staff meetings and trainings, and job tasks in all areas of the business.

Employers will probably find a checklist very useful. Checklist items might include arranging meeting times, planning with the program coordinator to insure that academic requirements are met, signing work agreements, arranging student workspace as appropriate, and informing students about company policies and procedures.

Review evaluation forms and procedures with employers at the beginning of the work experience. Set up a time for the employer, student, and cooperative education coordinator to conduct formal evaluations. Contact the employer and student prior to the evaluation in order for all to be prepared and to avoid any surprises. Remind employers and students that the evaluation should be a positive experience that highlights student accomplishments and enables students to make plans for future training goals.

Key to Connecting to the Classroom

Pre-experience Activities

- Students research the general career fields and specific organizations in which they will be working
- Students write about their preconceptions and expectations
- Students and teachers discuss professional standards for behavior and dress
- Teachers emphasize practical applications of the concepts and skills they teach in class
- Students and teachers develop training plans which outline students' learning objectives
- Students learn academic skills which they will use at the worksite

On-site Activities

- Students learn actual job and employability skills by participating in work activities
- Students observe and participate in practical applications of academic concepts
- Students work toward achieving individual goals and objectives
- Seminars provide students with opportunities to better understand their paid work experiences and enhance their learning. Curriculum may include the following.
- Job search skills and techniques (such as resume writing and interviewing skills)
- Development of goals and objectives
- Reflective assignments (such as weekly logs and journals)
- Education and discussion on workplace issues such as sexual harassment, workplace ethics, managing conflict, responding to criticism, labor laws, discrimination, and professionalism
- Workplace skills and techniques related to student placements
- Guest speakers
- Round-table discussions
- Collaborative learning activities
- Term projects in which students extend beyond the work experience through in-depth investigation
- Career exploration activities, including informational interviewing and research on continuing educational opportunities
- Development of portfolios which include a description of the work experience, agreements and training plans, photographs and descriptions of exemplary work or interesting experiences, resume, cover letter, and evaluations

Post-experience Activities

- Students write about the difference between their expectations and the reality of the workplace
- Students and teachers discuss the connections they see between classroom learning and the workplace
- Students and teachers together evaluate the student's progress toward meeting the learning objectives
- Students continue their career research in light of what they have learned during the work experience
- Students write, revise, and send thank you letters to the employer and the worksite supervisor/mentor