

# The Importance of Community Partnerships: The School to Work Pipeline

As outlined in [TPM RESOURCE GUIDE: A Compendium for High-Quality CTE](#), we are in an economy that competes on talent. Employers in a variety of industries are facing chronic skill shortages and are eagerly exploring new strategies to work with education partners to address their talent attraction, sourcing, retention, as well as diversity and equity needs.

Learners must also be effective in their pursuit of career awareness / career exploration activities and in connecting their education, training, and credentialing to employment. Workers, too, must find, access, and complete upskilling opportunities to achieve upward economic mobility.

Moreover, state leadership, as well as high schools and colleges, are exploring new strategies for engaging employers in ways that improve their responsiveness to employer needs. Complementary to this objective is enhancing career pathways and programs of study and ensuring simultaneous focus on opportunity gaps for populations with barriers to education, employment, and career advancement.

Strengthening relationships between employers and CTE is more important now than ever before. However, while the need for stronger employer and CTE partnerships is self-evident and growing, there remains major systemic challenges when it comes to engaging employers and sustaining these partnerships at the scale needed for an economy that competes on talent.

The [TPM RESOURCE GUIDE: A Compendium for High-Quality CTE](#), from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, provides a TPM framework, strategies, and resources to help engage employers with CTE programs. TPM is a field-tested and proven solution that was built by the business community based on their own best practices for partner engagement; these resources include examples of how TPM has been implemented in communities large and small. Resources and strategies from [TPM RESOURCE GUIDE: A Compendium for High-Quality CTE](#) will be incorporated throughout this module but can be explored in much greater detail or as an option for a fully implementable framework. The TPM Resource Guide is one of many sources that will be used throughout this module.

([Source](#))

Ultimately, community partnerships need to have a lasting impact on the workplace pipeline for them to be successful and beneficial for students and employers. If employers

don't see added value to the pipeline, what is their extrinsic motivation to participate in partnering with the school community? If students aren't gaining added value from the program, what is the point of having the program? Ensuring that these two questions are fully addressed ensures that your Work-Based Learning program will stay successful for years to come.

### **What Does the School to Work Pipeline Look Like?**

To help understand what the pipeline looks like, it is easiest to think of the Work-Based Learning Continuum and how we prepare students of different ages for success in college and careers through a variety of career awareness, career exploration, and workplace experience activities.

Work-Based Learning begins to prepare students for success in college and careers at a young age and incrementally builds as students progress through their educational journey.

- In earlier grades, Work-Based Learning activities help students explore careers through short-term experiences such as classroom speakers, career days, career fairs, and student-centered authentic learning experiences.
- As students approach high school, these experiences should continue but also become more abundant and intensive in the level of career awareness and exploration that they provide students. In addition to the activities already in place, students will begin participating in more extensive activities such as industry site visits, job shadows, Team-Based Challenges, and more intensive authentic learning projects in the classroom
- Prepared juniors and seniors may participate in “capstone” WBL experiences such as paid work experience or internships for high school credit through a Career Practicum course

It is important to understand that all activities students engage in, regardless of student grade level or where the activity falls on the Work-Based Learning Continuum, should be part of a larger plan to help ensure that students are prepared to be successful in a desired career after high school. Educators must understand that postsecondary requirements for different types of careers can vary greatly and that no one path is better than another. It is important for educators to support all students and provide opportunities for development to prepare every student for their postsecondary plans to reach their career of choice. Some of the different paths may include:

- School → **Career**

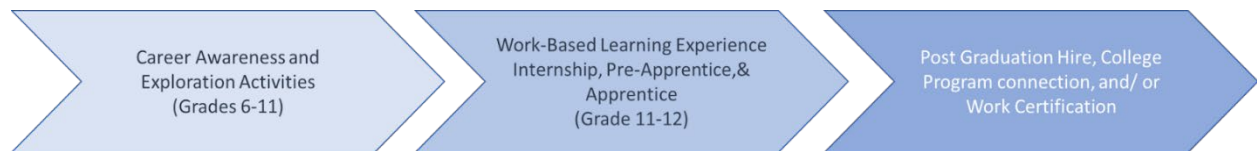
- School → Certification → **Career**
- School → Apprenticeship → **Career**
- School → Trade School → **Career**
- School → College → **Career**
- School → College → **Career** → College/Certificate

### **Communicate the Benefit of Partnerships to Employers**

Companies can save time and money by investing in local talent and identifying and recruiting future employees. Companies benefit from increased brand awareness and their status as locally preferred employers thanks to the relationships they develop with students, families, and the community. School Work-Based Learning coordinators assist by prescreening qualified candidates, matching employers with students who are interested and have related technical skills, and serving as the primary point of contact at the school. Participating students are motivated, mature, and may take on special projects that provide additional value to the employer. Companies assist students by growing their Technical and Essential Skill competencies, providing real experiences, and offering direct feedback to students who are developing reflection, portfolio development, and industry centered large scale projects.

### **Revisiting: Why WBL is needed in Illinois**

WBL has been shown to reinforce the value of work as well as the critical employability skills Illinois employers want most. By matching young talent with workplace mentors and positive employment through WBL, young people receive a positive and rich work experience. WBL has been shown to lead to positive future employment and improved lifelong earnings. Companies can better build a sustainable workforce and healthy, vibrant communities can flourish.



[Alternate Text Version](#)

