

Quality Work-Based Learning Programs



Recent research, policy literature, and federal legislation suggest that comprehensive Work-Based Learning programs contain three key components -- the alignment of classroom and workplace learning; application of academic, technical, and essential employability skills in an authentic work setting; and support from classroom or workplace mentors.

Alignment of Classroom and Workplace Learning	Application of Academic, Technical, and Essential Employability Skills in an Authentic Work Setting	Support from Classroom or Workplace Mentors
<p>Comprehensive work-based learning opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help meet industry demands for a more skilled workforce by providing opportunities for students to receive training, learn skills, and gain experience in all aspects of an industry • Map academic content to authentic workplace tasks and integrate workplace tasks and classroom instruction • Allow students to reflect on their learning process and experience • Require training for instructors on how to integrate Work-Based Learning experiences into curriculum and instruction. 	<p>Comprehensive work-based learning opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are based on rigorous academic and employability skill requirements • Include in-depth and hands-on work experiences (either on site or through simulated/virtual methods), with activities ranging from career awareness and exploration to career preparation and training 	<p>Comprehensive work-based learning opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote student engagement through mentorship from supervisors, instructors, and Work-Based Learning coordinators • Allow students to develop relationships with industry and community professionals • Are monitored and evaluated by workplace supervisors, classroom instructors, or Work-Based Learning coordinators • Offer training for mentors on providing students with industry specific support; general career and education guidance; personal and professional growth; and a caring, emotional connection.

[Alternative Text Version](#)

In order for students to receive the most benefit from Work-Based Learning, it is extremely important to ensure focus and implementation of:

- Skill Based Student Learning
- Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences
- Quality Work-Based Learning Programs

Skill Based Student Learning

Work-based learning in Illinois— whether career awareness or apprenticeship/internship focused — will help students meet both academic and workplace standards. In consultation with state agencies and key industry experts including hiring professionals, education and training professionals, and industry associations, industry-based steering committees were formed to identify and propose technical and professional competencies in response to the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness (PWR) Act. As a result of the work with various stakeholders and industry professionals, Illinois has identified the [Cross-Sector Essential Employability Competencies \(Essential Skills\)](#) as well as a set of Technical Competencies related to each Career Pathway within Illinois. Both the Essential Skills and Technical Competencies will be explored in greater detail later in this module.

The Essential Skills can be introduced and reinforced through all classes and Work-Based Learning experiences from elementary school onward. By the time they are seniors, students can build on this foundation to model employability skills and professional behaviors, and demonstrate readiness for postsecondary education and careers through academic performance and performance in Work-Based Learning settings.

Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences

To help students learn these skills, experiences must be of high quality. High quality experiences are defined as having the following characteristics:

- A purposeful focus on applied learning in preparation for postsecondary education and careers
- Learning outcomes as the driver for designing experiences and Personalized Learning Plans
- Relevance to student interests, their plan of study and learning goals
- Integration with curriculum or connection to related instruction
- Sufficient variety to provide exposure to multiple career options
- Sufficient depth to allow for employability skill development and professional community engagement

- Ongoing interaction with professionals from industry and the community
- Close supervision from both teachers and employers
- Opportunities for reflection and analysis
- Assessment of student learning that is aligned with industry specific expectations
- Alignment with postsecondary and career opportunities regionally
- Documentation of student learning through the development of artifacts and portfolios

Quality Work-Based Experience Courses

The associated Workplace Experience coursework should include:

- A practicum component with direct or simulated workplace experience that is aligned to each student’s individualized program of study and designed to meet their specific career goals.
- Direct instruction by an approved educator-coordinator on essential and technical employability skills in a virtual or classroom setting.
- Compensation via pay and/or academic credit to the student for their work
- An individual student plan
- A Professional Skills Assessment

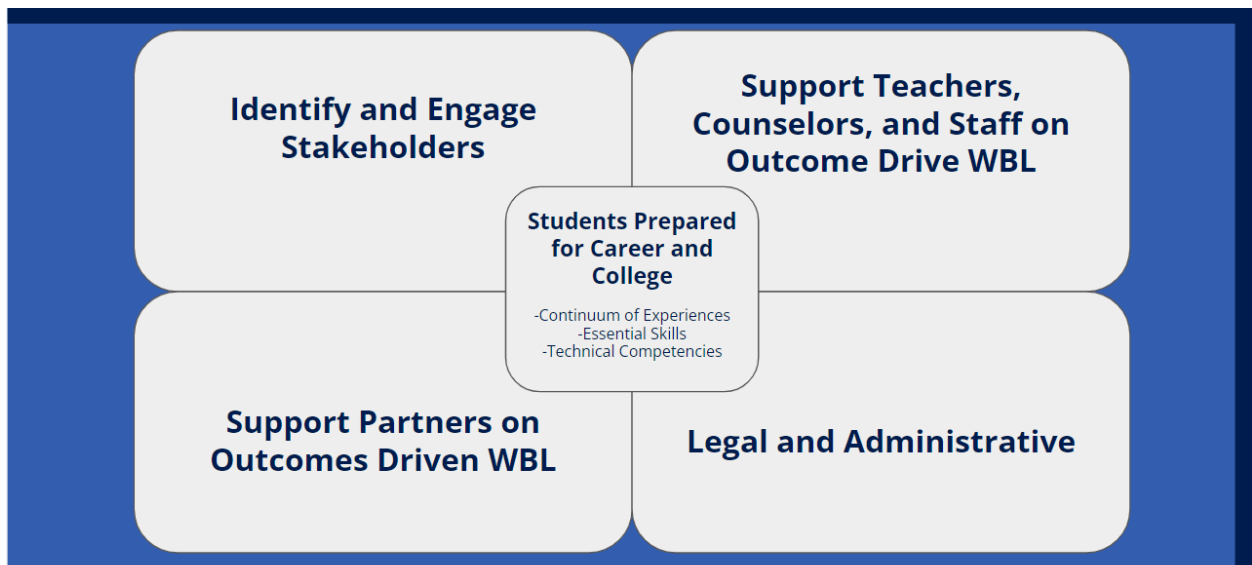
Quality Work-Based Learning Programs

Teachers and employers can’t do it alone! Structures and systems must be sufficient to support educators and employers in providing rigorous experiences to students. Quality programs provide:

- Sequenced experiences to ensure preparation and “next steps”
- Coordination of services among stakeholders (teachers, counselors, Work-Based Learning Coordinators, employers, etc.)
- Partnerships with postsecondary institutions, apprenticeships, and job training programs to facilitate successful transitions beyond high school
- Adequate staffing of the work-based learning coordination function
- School schedules that enable quality work-based learning and supervision

- Communication materials to inform employers, students and parents of opportunities
- Technology infrastructure to support placements, orientations, and actual Work-Based Learning experiences
- Tools, processes and documentation for quality control and compliance with legal requirements
- Community-based advisors involved in program and experience planning and generating opportunities for students
- A culture that values and supports Work-Based Learning across the curriculum for all students
- Evaluative measures that facilitate continuous program improvement

The image below outlines essential components of building a quality Work-Based Learning program. As you progress through later modules, you will see this image multiple times as we dive deeper into each component that ultimately helps to build a quality program.



Building a Work-Based Learning Program

