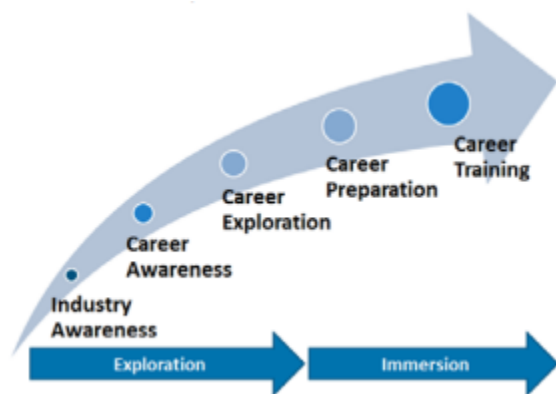


# Sequencing Work-Based Learning Activities

## Sequencing Work-Based Learning Activities

The full spectrum of Work-Based Learning opportunities begins with classroom speakers and workplace tours and culminates in credit-bearing, “capstone” experiences such as internships and apprenticeships. According to the Work-Based Learning Manual, students should participate in awareness and exploration of Work-Based Learning experiences and reflect on what they learned to be prepared to participate in more advanced Work-Based Learning experiences. Designing a progression of experiences serves several purposes: learning and development, equity and “reality checking,” and informed decision-making. In addition, implementing awareness and exploration activities prior to high school helps schools meet the PaCE Framework requirements for providing career exploration activities for younger students.



## Learning and skill development

Offering a range of experiences enables students to develop Essential Skills over time. The Career Pathway Endorsements set a high bar for student attainment of Essential Skills. However, just as students must master arithmetic before they can handle calculus, students must practice employability skills before they can exhibit mastery. For example, students can enhance their communication skills through engagement with career speakers and job shadowing in the Career Awareness and Career Exploration phases. While learning about the industries in their communities, students are provided with opportunities to practice and develop Essential Skills through authentic engagement. They will also have the opportunity to reflect on their own interests and skills in relation to the skills needed in the workplaces they are learning about. This will then help them identify more advanced Workplace Experiences and other courses where they can learn and apply the skills in real workplace settings.

### **Equity and “Reality Checking”**

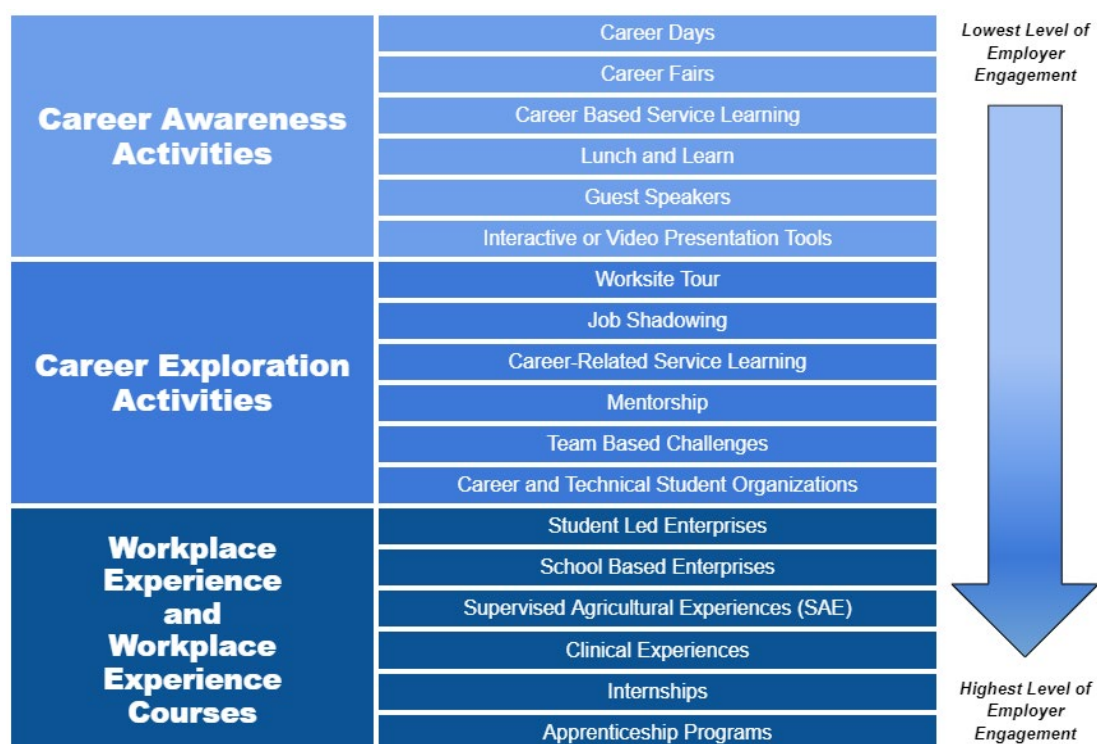
Starting with speakers, tours, and job shadows provides a relatively low-cost way to ensure that all students are exposed to options that they may not have heard or thought about. A workplace tour can help expose students and show them the reality of different and new careers. The activities should provide them an opportunity to both see for themselves and ask questions. Seeding these ideas early enables the consideration of options to take root. This is particularly important when students are the first in their families to consider college or work options that their parents may not be aware of.

### **Informed Decision-Making**

Exposing students to a variety of options early on allows them to make informed decisions about their future and work toward capstone Work-Based Learning experiences. For example, if students learn about opportunities in manufacturing when they are 15 years old, they have time to consider these careers and prepare for future interviews and Work-Based Learning experiences when they are 17 and 18 years old. There is also time to introduce parents to these topics and to help families explore their financial options to support their children in the future. Each level of Work-Based Learning is characterized by its own purposes, activities and outcomes.

### **The Continuum of Activities as a Learning Progression**

A learning progression is a pathway composed of building blocks that students travel as they progress toward mastery of employability skills. The activity types in the Work-Based Learning graphic below can be interpreted as building blocks of a learning progression. Career awareness experiences prepare students for meaningful career exploration experiences. Career exploration experiences prepare students for career development experiences and workplace experience courses. Put another way, students first need exposure to ideas, then opportunities for exploration in which they take an active role, and finally opportunities for more in-depth hands-on application of classroom knowledge in real world settings through rigorous, credit-bearing capstone experiences.



#### Alternative Text Version

### **Sequencing and Skills-Based Student Learning**

Work-based learning in Illinois — whether participation in career fairs or internships — will help students meet both academic and workplace standards. As mentioned previously, Illinois teachers, administrators, counselors, and industry partners worked with ISBE to identify key Essential Skills that students can and should learn through Work-Based Learning experiences. These skills can be introduced and reinforced through all classes and Work-Based Learning experiences from elementary school onward. It is essential to ensure focus on learning the Essential Skills is present in all Work-Based Learning regardless of grade level; Students developing the Essential Skills through Career Awareness activities in elementary and middle school sets the foundation for future success. 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 portfolios and presentations.

The following illustrates how a possible sequence of high-quality experiences indicates a quality WBL program:

