Stakeholder Engagement

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Ensuring Diversity Amongst Stakeholders

The State of Illinois strongly believes that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are integral parts of our Work-Based Learning Programs. Keeping in mind that much of the work of Work-Based Learning programs is to address issues around non-traditional careers, discrimination in the work place, and socioeconomic impacts to large segments of the population based on historical practices, keeps us aware that more needs to be done to tackle these important issues.

Below are a few of practices that can help ensure Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion are a focus of your Work-Based Learning Program:

- Ensuring stakeholder groups appropriately represent our student and community populations with a diverse group of individuals
- Creating a culture where stakeholder groups and advisory board members can openly discuss topics related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Inviting organizations servicing minority communities to participate in school or district wide activities
- Ensuring communication is accessible to all
- Eliminating barriers
- Understanding the schedule and work demands of families and offering opportunities for engagement that best work with their schedules
- Creating a safe environment in your school that recognizes and addresses bias, microaggressions, and stereotypes

It is important to recognize early on that stakeholder groups for your Work-Based Learning Program should consist of a diverse group of individuals. As you look to implement or grow your Work-Based Learning program, it is essential to keep Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the forefront of all planning. The importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion relating to students in your Work-Based Learning program will be explored in greater detail later in this module.

Coordination Between Teachers and Counselors

Career assessment, counseling, and planning are critical to ensure that Work-Based Learning experiences are meaningful for the student. Career awareness and career exploration activities are intended to spur students' thinking about options and their own interests. Students also need opportunities to document and reflect on their experiences in order to shape their ideas and goals. Facilitation of this reflection is the responsibility of the teacher or Work-Based Learning coordinator as part of the classroom experiences that connect Work-Based Learning to curriculum and students' goals. However, some of the assessment, counseling, and planning work will be the responsibility of the school counselor.

There are important reasons for including counselors in Work-Based Learning planning:

- Students' experiences and interests contribute to course selections and decision-making about postsecondary options. As counselors track students' educational progress, it is important that they have up-to-date information about the student's interests and goals.
- Counselors can then help students update their plans and schedules. They can also encourage students in thoughtful ways and help them reflect on their experiences.
- Counselors have expertise in career development. Knowledge of career assessments and of counseling practices is important to promote the accurate interpretation of — and appropriate use of — results and information gleaned from conversations with students.
- Students may share their thoughts with a "neutral" counselor— a staff person who has no influence on grades — that they may not share with a teacher.

Possible Coordination Roles and Responsibilities

Opportunities	Counselor	Teacher (6-12)	Work-Based Learning Coordinator (11th and 12th grade)
Facilitate career-related assessment and provide informational materials	Provides informational materials and conversations on career-related topics	Assessment is mostly driven by the teacher, sharing these assessments and data with counselors for data driven decisions for students	Accessible to Work-Based Learning Coordinators to draw conclusions
Facilitate understanding and planning	Focus on the planning components	Focus on the understanding of Technical and Essential Skills	Focus on both, combined with workplace skills and professional networking opportunities
Engage parents and promote dialogue between parents and students and/or peer and other mentor relationships around career exploration and goal-setting	-Opportunity to engage parents at parent-teacher conferences (focused around careers) -Host workshops on career and college planning for parents	-Build relationships with with parents to inquire about familial issues impacting career choices -Create opportunities to grow with their peers and/or mentors	Engage mentorships and networking opportunities to increase placement for post high school career options
Self-Assessment Exercises	Have a placeholder to keep documents of self assessment exercises	Work with counselors and staff to create time to offer self assessments, monitor them and implement strategies	Re-assessing students as they enter a Work-Based Learning Workplace setting to ensure their placed correctly
Goal setting exercises	Have an accessible goal sheet– discuss them at times of class registration and other pertinent discussions	Complete goal setting exercises – 4 year goal plan, College and Career Plan and/or 10 year plan	Complete a new goals assessment with students to make sure their goals are aligned with early goals from middle and early high school
Resume writing exercises	Have an accessible resume of each student– provide copies for when applying to jobs, career programs, etc.	-Work with students to start/finish a first resume -Match information and formatting with their pathway	Consider options in editing old resumes or creating new ones that focus on the industry requirements the student is looking to enter
Networking exercises	-Use your network of individuals to assist students as needed -Collaborate with teachers to organize networking opportunities	-Provide opportunities for students to meet outside community members -Offer incentives for students to partake in networking activities -Organize activities	-Coordinate lunch and learns -Coordinate networking opportunities for students in your Work-Based Learning experience
Monitoring	Discuss roles of each group to see who monitors what and how the schools/districts information collection system will be implemented at full scale. Some events will include dual layers of monitoring to ensure students do not fall between the cracks.		

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Career Awareness and Counseling

Schools use a number of tools to assess students' career interests. Regardless of the system used, career assessment results should be used as a starting point for conversation about the careers associated with the student's interests and talents. Work-Based Learning provides the opportunity to explore interests and identify fulfilling career options. Discussing results of career assessments and interests with students serves several important purposes:

- Students are empowered to take ownership of the results of their own career path.
- Students learn the value of all their courses and see how their current studies will be used later in life.
- Students learn to focus on and master employability skills that can transfer across industry areas and are valuable in postsecondary education and careers.
- Students develop the ability to discuss how their skills transfer to a variety of contexts and will help them keep their options open.

Career and Educational Planning

As previously outlined, students' career exploration should be reflected in their individualized education and career plans, consistent with the requirements of the Postsecondary Workforce Readiness Act. Plans should remain flexible, with students having the opportunity to regularly update the plans as they learn more about themselves and future options. Students' Work-Based Learning reflections can help students update their educational plans. While remaining flexible, plans should also be firm enough to ensure that students stay "on track."

Early planning — before high school — can establish a general direction and ensure that students receive all the courses they need to enter postsecondary education and future careers. As previously mentioned, the PaCE Framework includes career awareness and exploration activities for students complete prior to entering high school.

The high school plan of study required by the state board should play a part in planning for Work-Based Learning. Career exploration and Work-Based Learning provide additional data for the plan of study, but should not derail a student from making expected progress towards graduation requirements. For example, discovering that little math was used in a particular Work-Based Learning placement would not be sufficient reason to drop or not take a math class.

In addition, it is important to ensure that students and families understand that completing a Work-Based Learning course contributes to the credits students can earn to fulfill their elective requirements for graduation.

[Alternate Text Version](#)

Engaging Parents

Parents and guardians play critical — if not the most critical — roles in helping students think about future options and realize their goals. In addition to offering career assessment and counseling as part of the students' educational planning, schools may encourage parents to assist students in discovering their unique strengths and interests. This may be done in the context of general informational meetings about the career exploration activities and other opportunities provided by

Work-Based Learning programs. It may also involve collaborating with parent organizations to offer educational workshops for parents. It is important to partner with school counselors when developing plans to engage parents and families. School counselors often have family engagement activities in place that could be accessed to help increase awareness and understanding of career awareness, career exploration, and other Work-Based Learning opportunities.

Community Organizations
Every community in which a school operates has its own unique characteristics. It is important to understand that the uniqueness of each community must be understood as you look to partner with community organizations. A variety of factors impact the makeup of a community (location, population, demographics, etc.). Just as communities may look different, the organizations within those communities may look different. There are no set of characteristics that make one community better than another when developing a Work-Based Learning program and looking to grow community partnerships. It is important for the Work-Based Learning Coordinator to understand the makeup of the community and play to the advantages and uniqueness of the community. For example, oftentimes being a rural community is falsely viewed as being a disadvantage. You must play to the advantages of your community; rural communities often have high levels of interest for engagement from organizations with lesser competition for resources.

Regardless of the community you are in, it is essential to ensure focus on community organizations is consistent through planning, implementation, and administration of programs. Successful Work-Based Learning programs will ensure consistent and intentional focus on:

- Sharing the Classroom with the Community: Community organizations and educators plan together to create or simulate real-world projects and experiences for students. Local employers lend their knowledge and expertise to provide opportunities for engaging, real-world learning.
- Depth of experience: Employers and community organizations supplement classroom learning by providing speakers, tours, teacher externships, project feedback, mentoring, internships, apprenticeships, or work experience for students of various learning levels. Experiences build on one another to help students grow.
- Connection to curriculum: Academic, professional and interpersonal skills introduced in class are reinforced in practice. Students set goals for their learning, participate in collaborative work that allows them to think critically and communicate effectively, and demonstrate the Essential and Technical skills that are necessary in postsecondary education and careers.

As you will see throughout this course, the concept of involving community organizations as partners is present and resurfaces in multiple modules.

Some common community organizations include:
Rural Settings
- Farm Bureau
- Police Department/ Sheriff Department
- County Government
- Local Library
- Local Non-for-profits

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- Historical Societies
- Community College
- Post Office
- Local Restaurants
- Medical Clinics or local Veterinarian
- Banks
- Local Manufacturer/Factory

Urban Settings
- University
- Police Department
- City/County Government
- Library
- Hospitals, Veterinarian, Clinics, and other forward facing medical groups
- Financial Institutions (banks, investment firms, small businesses)
- Business/Realtors/ Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Building Trades

Understanding Partnership Structures along the WBL Continuum
As previously outlined, business and community partnerships are essential to the success of a Work-Based Learning Program. Community based partnerships provide support for students and teachers that focus on specific career training and essential skill practices.

One consistent takeaway from industry feedback is that individuals entering the workforce need further practice and development of the Essential Skills. Working with local community partners drives the conversation on Essential Skill development and works to create an environment that connects students to mentors, increases technical skills, teaches teamwork, and provides a foundation for students to network locally. We will discuss the importance of incorporating the Essential Skills in Work-Based Learning planning in greater detail later in this module.
It is important to recognize that numerous opportunities arise for students from employer engagement in Work-Based Learning opportunities. These opportunities may be presented as Team-Based Challenges, speaker presentations, job shadows, or internships to name a few. Employer participation in these activities can heavily influence a students' perspective on their career paths. The Work-Based Learning Manual outlines numerous engagement opportunities for community members to take part in these initiatives; we will explore these opportunities in greater detail in Module 4.

Once you understand the importance of partnerships in Work-Based Learning, it is important to understand the varying levels of partnership and what they may look like in Work-Based Learning.

How are Partnerships defined in your setting?
Partnerships in districts may look different based on numerous factors that impact the level of commitment between schools and community organizations. There are a lot of ways to implement partnerships, but the following five descriptors outline what partnerships look like in the educational setting:

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- Networking - informal communication, dialog, and loosely defined roles that often lead to volunteer opportunities and lower levels of employer engagement
- Cooperation or Alliance - matching the needs of each other to create a semi-formal relationship that is advisory in nature
- Partnership - a formal relationship that has common goals and objectives, merges resources, and creates a central leadership meeting (board/governing body) to address the needs institutions
- Coalition - shared vision that is formal, built on regular monthly communication in which resources are shared to create a new organization
- Collaboration - the highest form of coalition in which high levels of trust, collaboration, leadership and communication are built on interdependent relationships and formal processes

It is important to note that most relationships start with a base level of networking and grow over the months and years to the Coalition and Collaboration levels. It is also important to recognize the challenges of forming partnerships as it is not a simple process; developing relationships takes time.

Regardless of the level of the relationship, meaningful Work-Based Learning opportunities can result and enhance learning for students. However, the more developed the relationship, the higher the level of employer engagement thus increasing likelihood of opportunities that support Work-Based Learning opportunities towards the right side of the Work-Based Learning continuum.

Work-Based Learning Relationship Levels

Informal and/or Semi-Formal (Networking, Cooperation, and Partnership)
- Career Awareness - activities in middle and high school that allow students introductory facing opportunities to learn about careers, skills directly associated with college and career, and may include:
  - Classroom speakers on different topics about careers
  - Attending a career fair
  - Creating a classroom video or interview on their career
  - Assisting with low level planning or events
  - One time class room visit or Lunch and Learn

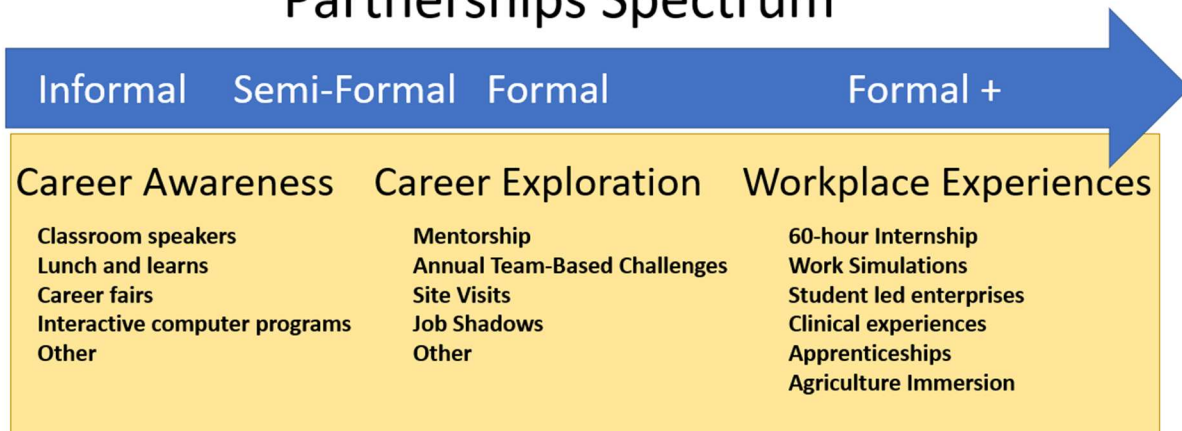*Formal (Partnership, and/or Coalition)*
- Career Exploration - activities in middle and high school that dive deeper into analysis and research of careers
  - Classroom speaker on multiple occasions/assists with programming
  - Volunteers on a regular basis with classroom
  - Volunteers to assist on an annual event
  - Volunteers to assist regularly with CTSO or field experience
  - Offers an annual or biannual site visit
  - Participates in Job shadows
  - Volunteers on an annual project or Authentic Learning
  - Mentors throughout the course of a year
  - Assists in Team-Based Challenges

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Formal + (Collaboration)
- Workplace Experience - employers offer systematic approaches that directly impact student learning and workplace experiences. An employer may participate in one of the following or more activities below:
  - Serves on a Work-Based Learning Advisory Board offering insight in program development and improvement
  - Offers capstone class development and support
  - Provides internship opportunities
  - Provides apprenticeship opportunities
  - Clinical experiences
  - Offers yearly simulations conducted in workplace settings

Partnerships Spectrum

Informal	Semi-Formal	Formal	Formal +

Career Awareness	Career Exploration	Workplace Experiences
Classroom speakers	Mentorship	60-hour Internship
Lunch and learns	Annual Team-Based Challenges	Work Simulations
Career fairs	Site Visits	Student led enterprises
Interactive computer programs	Job Shadows	Clinical experiences
Other	Other	Apprenticeships
		Agriculture Immersion

Collaboration with Employers to Meet Workforce Needs
Input from employers is critical to preparing a Work-Based Learning course curriculum, just as input from any group of experts is needed to shape state and local curricula. In the case of career-related education and work-based learning, regular input may even be more critical, as changes in workplace demands are ongoing.

The Essential Skills and Technical Competencies were developed with direct input from a variety of stakeholders including industry experts and various Illinois employers. Knowledge of the various industries offering Work-Based Learning experiences will enable teachers to guide students and speak to employers to ensure that students have access to the opportunities that will build a broad range of skills. However, some industries place greater importance on some skill sets than others; knowledge of these industry-specific needs is also important. Further, if a community is home to a major industry or employer that will be providing many of the opportunities for students — whether job shadowing, intensive experiences as part of the Career Development Experience, or future employment — close communication with the employer community will enable the teacher to prepare students to learn and demonstrate those skills that are particularly valuable in that industry.

There are many ways to connect with employers to ensure that students' experiences match future workplace demands. The most common method to grow these connections is through

communication with employers with intentional outreach in advisory boards. These boards investigate ways that teachers can better understand and communicate to students some of the experiences students could face in a Work-Based Learning setting. One of the best ways to do that, is to ensure educators take part in a Work-Based Learning teacher externship. These externships expose educators to day-long or multi-day experiences that grow relationships and offer insight in how to connect students to the Essential and Technical skills needed in the career field. They also provide teachers with a direct contact with community members they can reach out to for mentorship opportunities, career exploration, classroom discussion topics, etc.

In addition, ongoing communication during teachers' monitoring visits to workplaces can provide insights that will benefit all students. Regardless of the approach, the intention is to promote systematic communication between industry and educators, so that teachers have input on skill needs and feedback on the preparedness of their students. Administrators can also benefit from systematic communication through such venues as Chambers of Commerce. Such interactions will enable administrators to support teachers in preparing students for postsecondary education, careers, and civic life while bringing visibility to the school and building the workforce pipeline for growing Illinois industries.

The steps below will help you prepare to work with employer partners to address workforce needs.

Determine Employer Needs, Interests and Support
This task is one in which you should receive help from the Advisory Board. Some of the things you need to determine are:

1. Number and types of occupations in the community
2. Number of employers willing and able to provide suitable training
3. Potential short- and long-range needs for trained employees, and
4. Training needs for particular occupations or for competency areas.

Determine Labor Market Demands and Trends
Through partnership with your EFE Director, school administrators (i.e.CTE Director) and community organizations (i.e. Chamber of Commerce), determine the most recent labor market information in the region. In determining the employment profile of a particular region, some of the more important types of data needed for Work-Based Learning planning decisions are:

1. Number employed in the various occupations in the region served by the school or district;
2. Long- and short-term labor market demand projections in the regionally-identified occupational categories and clusters;
3. Types of learning experiences which may be provided by business, government, and other regional enterprises;
4. Size and location of establishments;
5. Special employment restrictions of certain occupations;
6. Estimates regarding reductions, expansions, and additions to the region's employment community; and
7. Possible apprenticeship opportunities.

Collecting primary data by survey is very time consuming. To avoid the possibility of duplicating much work that has already been accomplished, Work-Based Learning planners should look for secondary sources of labor market information. Some secondary sources include:

- [Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity](#)
- [The Illinois State Board of Education](#)
- [Illinois Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [US Bureau of Labor Statistics](#)
- [US Census Business](#)
- [U.S. Department of Labor Employment & Training Administration](#)
- [Illinois Office of the Governor](#)
- Local library
- Labor unions in your area
- Local, state, and area planning commissions in your area
- Utility companies in your area
- Municipal government units in your area
- Retailers associations in your area