

## What is Work-Based Learning?

Work-Based Learning is defined in [Perkins V](#) legislation as, “sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.” It is an effective teaching strategy used to engage students in real-life, authentic occupational experiences. It incorporates structured, work-based learning activities into the curriculum, allowing a student to apply knowledge and skills learned in class and connect these learning experiences in the workplace.



Work-Based Learning provides students with the opportunity to engage and interact with industry experts such as employers and postsecondary institutions, while learning to demonstrate essential employability and technical skills necessary for today’s workforce.

### Potential benefits to students who participate in work-based learning in conjunction with their classroom experience include:

- Improved academic achievement.
- Increased awareness of the relevance of academic content in real-world situations.
- Expanded opportunity to explore career options and related education/training.
- Increased self-confidence.
- Attainment of real workplace experience and employability skills.
- Connection to a professional network and potential mentors.
- Increased likeliness to pursue a postsecondary certificate or credential after high school.

# What does Work-Based Learning look like in Illinois?

Work-Based Learning in Illinois is modeled after the Perkins V definition and incorporates the essential components outlined in the previous section. Work-based learning in Illinois is defined as a continuum of authentic learning experiences that includes activities focused on career awareness and career exploration and culminates with a workplace experience related to the student's program of study.

Work-Based Learning in Illinois focuses on providing students with authentic occupational learning experiences that allow students to develop employability skills needed for postsecondary success. In addition to the real-world, authentic experiences, students receive ongoing classroom instruction and support from mentors that complements the learning taking place in the workplace.

Student experiences should follow the Illinois Work-Based Learning Continuum, which is outlined in greater detail later in this module, and interaction with employers should increase as a student progresses through their educational journey.

The early stages of the work-based learning continuum focus on career awareness and exploration activities that help increase student knowledge about possible career clusters and specific jobs that are available. Career awareness should begin with younger elementary students so they will be able to connect their current activities to a meaningful career path. It is important to note that Work-Based Learning experiences (from across the continuum) can and should be built into existing classes to supplement existing content.

From a larger scale perspective, Work-Based Learning also represents a Workplace Experience Course in which a student earns pay and/or academic credit while focusing on skill development. This experience is paired with supporting classroom learning, an individual student plan, and professional skills assessment.

Work-Based Learning as it relates to College and Career Pathway Endorsements will likely not be a stand-alone course, but, instead, an internship experience aligned with the identified Career Pathway of interest. In addition, College and Career Pathway Endorsement Work-Based Learning experiences have specific criteria that must be met. These criteria include:

- 60 hours of paid or credit supervised career development experience
- Career development experience is directly related to the Career Pathway of interest
- Professional skills assessment

As you progress through this course, you will receive information that is relevant to implementing or overseeing a Work-Based Learning Program within your school. The Work-Based Learning program within your school may include some or all of the varying applications of Work-Based Learning. Although the focus in the course will be largely on creating a program for overseeing a Workplace Experience Course, information and callouts related to other forms of Work-Based Learning will be provided throughout.