

Work Planning

Identifying a WBL experience that is the right fit for a student can be a difficult task. This becomes even more evident if a student is placed in a situation that is not of their choosing. WBL programs that place students in a work experience that they do not want to participate in or for credit recovery purposes are not providing students with the fit that best supports the student's success. Similarly, ensuring that the workplace experience for the community partner is important as well, because the skills students are learning is essential to strengthen local workforce development initiatives in the future. As mentioned in the previous module, these work experiences should both focus on the Essential Skills and Technical Competencies. We will explore this in greater detail in this module. As a part of section 6.1, we will be investigating the use of "training stations," to ensure that students are placed in proper work settings, are given tasks that measure their skills, and are properly trained and assessed in the work they are completing.

Characteristics Of Desirable Training Stations

The following checklist identifies characteristics of desirable training stations and provides the proper supports for a high functioning WBL program.

General Characteristics

The training station:

- has the potential to provide training that would be challenging and worthy of the student's learning time and effort.
- has facilities and equipment that are up-to-date and typical of the equipment found throughout the occupation, taking into considerations and modifications for nontraditional students.
- will be able to provide employment throughout the term or year or as needed to align with the needs of student workplace experiences.
- has personnel who are in agreement with the primary training objectives of WBL.
- will follow provisions contained in training plans and agreements.
- will provide time for periodic conferences with the teacher coordinator.
- will provide input on topics for classroom instruction to support student learning

Staffing

The training station:

- has employees who would serve as good adult role models.
- has personnel who would be able and willing to provide adequate supervision and training.
- has personnel who are willing to evaluate student progress.
- has potential for a mentoring relationship with a worker

Student Centered

The training station:

- will provide training that relates to a student's career goals.
- is sufficiently accessible to student learners.
- has personnel who will assist in developing an individualized training plan for each student learner.
- meets equal employment opportunity guidelines in its hiring and employment practices.

Ethics

The training station:

- follows ethical business practices.
- honors union agreements (where applicable).
- has clearly outlined hiring, promotion, and dismissal practices that are fairly and consistently applied.
- will provide part-time work for students that will not displace other workers.
- has a reputation that is acceptable within the community and among other members of the same occupation.

Safety

The training station:

- will provide a working environment that will not endanger the health, safety, welfare, or morals of the student learner.
- will provide working hours that are within the WBL employment policy constraints.

Well-Rounded Experience

The training station:

- will provide an opportunity for students to rotate through the various aspects of the job.
- will reimburse student-learners commensurate with other beginning workers.
- will offer a variety of experiences for the student-learner.

Evaluative

The training station:

- will partner with the teacher coordinator and other school staff to increase knowledge of effective assessment.
- will partner with the teacher coordinator and other school staff to increase knowledge of the Essential Skills and Technical Competencies
- will evaluate student performance and provide feedback to the teacher-coordinator and to the student.
- will help with allocating time and energy for the student to complete a WBL portfolio.

Where to Begin?

Using the resources available to you, start looking at local organizations, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, and other community stakeholders to identify prospective training stations. This may include using some of the following resources:

- advisory committee members
- student personnel services from the Regional Office of Education
- trade or business associations
- Local Chamber of Commerce
- local employment security offices
- Internet searches
- classified section of the local newspaper
- word of mouth from associates
- other teacher-coordinators in the region
- collaboration with administration to evaluate existing community partners that can be leveraged

Once potential sites are identified, it is the responsibility of the WBL coordinator or teacher to set-up a time to view the training stations and workplace to ensure these will be a proper fit for prospective student employees.

Placing Students at Training Stations

A student's career goal should be the key factor in determining the training station at which he/she is placed. The following suggestions for student placement may be helpful:

1. Avoid placing students in seasonal jobs, or in jobs likely to have seasonal lay-offs, unless the seasonal position aligns with the student's career goals and allows them to fully complete the needed workplace experience within the limited employment timeframe.
2. Place students in training stations where the hours to be worked will not be detrimental to their educational development.
3. Place students in training stations at which they will be able to obtain a variety of valuable learning experiences.
4. Avoid placing too many students at one training station.
5. Determine the method employers want to use in interviewing and employing students.
6. Employers should be given the names of the students who will be applying for a particular job.
7. When possible, send more than one student to interview at each potential training station.
8. Allow final selection of student learners to be made by the employer.

Try to avoid using the following methods in placing students. These methods have obvious disadvantages.

1. The teacher-coordinator chooses one student and sends him/her out for an interview. If this student is not hired, successive students are sent.
2. All students with a particular career goal are sent to interview at all applicable training stations.