

Spanning the WBL Continuum

Introduction

Work-Based Learning is a proactive approach to bridging the gap between high school and high demand, high-skill careers. As briefly outlined in an earlier module, Work-Based Learning activities follow a continuum that begin by helping students develop a broad understanding and awareness of industries and possible careers that are available to them. Over time, these experiences narrow in focus as students find a good fit, learn what postsecondary education is necessary for success, and practice the technical and Essential Skills needed to enter those careers later in life. It is important for a Work-Based Learning Coordinator to have a full understanding of the Work-Based Learning Continuum, associated Work-Based Learning Activities, and implementation and sequencing of these activities as a student progresses through their educational journey.

Revisiting Work-Based Learning Language

Having a solid understanding of Work-Based Learning language as it applies to different components of the Work-Based Learning Continuum is essential to ensuring that we are properly planning and implementing Work-Based Learning activities that meet students needs.

In module one, we introduced Work-Based Learning language that you will see throughout this course. Before progressing through this module, please revisit the terms listed below and ensure that you have a solid understanding of each and how they relate to the Work-based Learning Continuum. As we progress through the module, we will take a deeper look at the activities which fall within each component of the continuum.

Career Awareness Activities

As stated in the ISBE Work-Based Learning Manual, the first stage of the work-based learning continuum is career awareness. Career Awareness Activities provide information about possible career clusters and specific jobs that are available, and how to explore one's own abilities and interests.

Career Exploration Activities

As stated in the ISBE Work-Based Learning Manual, Career Exploration Activities provide opportunities for direct student contact with employers or other partners for the purpose of gaining knowledge of one or more industry sectors or occupations. At this level, students begin to learn not just about careers but interaction of careers within an industry and more fully participate in experiences related to those careers.

Career Development Experience

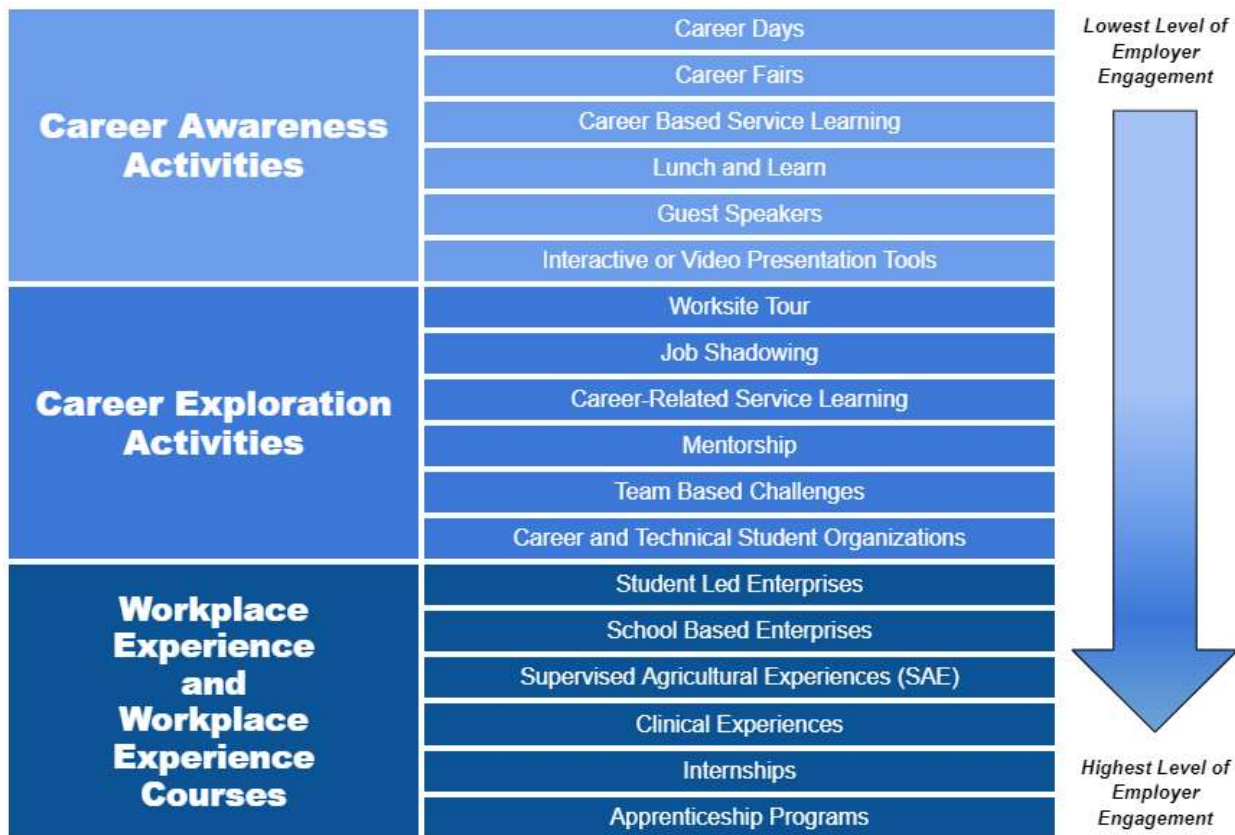
A supervised work experience relating to an individual's career area of interest that should:

- Occur in a workplace or under authentic working conditions, but could include a work simulation project or be offered through a virtual platform.
- Be co-developed by an education provider and at least one employer in the relevant field.

- Provide compensation OR educational credit (or both) to the participant.
- Reinforce foundational professional skills, including, at a minimum, those outlined in the Essential Employability Skills framework.
- Include a Professional Skills Assessment and be utilized as a participant feedback tool.
- Take place for a minimum of 60 total cumulative hours.

Workplace Experience

"Workplace Experience" refers to CTE courses that provide students with in person, remote, or simulated work experience within their CTE program of study. These courses must include remote or classroom instruction and a workplace practicum that aligns to the Career Development Experiences. Because workplace experiences must meet the requirements of a Career Development Experience, you may, at times, see these terms used interchangeably in the field.



[Alternative Text Version](#)

As you progress through the remainder of this module, you will explore each of the Work-Based Learning activities included in the graphic in greater detail.