

Education Partner Guide to Work-Based Learning

Thank you for supporting work-based learning. These opportunities allow students from high school through college to build skills, gain valuable work experience, and connect their education to meaningful career pathways. Work-based learning can also support graduation requirements, provide college credit, or contribute to professional certifications.

Work-based learning (WBL) is built on the principle that people learn best when they apply knowledge to real-world situations. By engaging directly with employers, students gain both academic and practical experiences that prepare them for future employment while helping fill critical roles in the labor market.

Why Work-Based Learning Matters

When education partners, employers, and workforce organizations collaborate, students benefit from coordinated opportunities, employers develop their talent pipeline, and educators can more effectively connect classroom learning to career readiness.

WBL experiences reduce the burden on educators to create opportunities alone, while ensuring students receive high-quality experiences with clear learning outcomes.

Priority Populations

Work-based learning should be accessible to a wide range of students. Experiences can be designed for:

- High school students (typically ages 16–18, grades 10–12).
- College students pursuing associate or bachelor's degrees.
- Non-traditional or adult learners seeking credentials or career changes.

Equity is a central priority. Educators and advisors should help identify diverse participants, including women, students of color, first-generation learners, and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, so all students have access to these opportunities.

Key Features of Strong WBL Opportunities

High-quality WBL experiences typically include:

- Paid internships or apprenticeships when possible.
- Alignment with in-demand industries and emerging fields.
- Clearly defined learning outcomes that integrate with coursework, training programs, or credential requirements.
- Meaningful work with specific roles and responsibilities that provide real-world experience.

Process Guide for Education Partners

The following steps provide a framework for designing and implementing work-based learning opportunities:

1. Planning and Partnership

Educators, career services staff, or program leaders begin by engaging with employers or workforce partners to discuss program components, student populations, and roles and responsibilities.

2. Employer Engagement

Employers provide information about available opportunities, such as:

- Occupation and industry focus
- Pay rate (if applicable)
- Hours per week and schedule
- Required qualifications or prerequisites

3. Student Alignment

Educators assess whether the opportunity aligns with student schedules, academic requirements, and credential or graduation needs. Advisors then identify student candidates who meet the job's requirements while ensuring diversity and equity.

4. Student Preparation

Students may participate in:

- Career readiness workshops on professionalism, communication, workplace safety, and employee rights.
- Resume and interview preparation.

Employers may also receive orientation to ensure they are ready to supervise and mentor students effectively.

5. Industry Tours or Job Shadowing (Optional)

Some programs begin with industry tours or short-term job shadowing to expose students to the workplace before a longer-term internship or apprenticeship.

6. Application and Interview

Students apply or interview just as they would for a professional position. Selection for participation is at the discretion of the employer.

7. Offer and Confirmation

Once selected, students and employers confirm details such as:

- Rate of pay
- Internship or apprenticeship duration

- Hours and schedule
- Dress code
- Required tools or materials (with clear guidance on who provides them)

8. Training Plan

Educators and employers collaborate to create a Training Plan, such as the [TEA Training Plan Agreement](#), that outlines:

- Specific skills and competencies the student should gain
- Alignment with course credit, certifications, or degree requirements
- Assessments or deliverables tied to the experience

O*NET and other labor market resources can be used to align training plans with industry standards.

9. Ongoing Support and Communication

Educators, workforce partners, and employers remain in contact to monitor progress, address challenges, and adjust as needed. Regular check-ins ensure the student is supported both academically and professionally.

10. Evaluation and Completion

At the conclusion of the experience:

- Employers provide feedback and performance evaluations.
- Educators assess learning outcomes and confirm credit or credential alignment where applicable.
- Students reflect on their learning and identify next steps.
- Recognition of successful completion (certificates, transcripts, or digital badges) can help students document their experience for future opportunities.

Conclusion

Work-based learning is a shared responsibility between employers, educators, and workforce partners. By collaborating, education partners can reduce barriers for students, expand access to meaningful experiences, and prepare learners at both the high school and college levels for success in the workforce.

For more information or to explore partnership opportunities, educators are encouraged to connect with local workforce boards, higher education career services, or employer associations. For information about opportunities delivered by Workforce Solutions of West Central Texas through the Work-based Learning Program visit www.wfswct.org/wbl or email wbl@wfswct.org.