

Work-Based Learning Overview

Contents

- Earn & Learn Fact Sheet
- Quality Work-Based Learning
- Benefits of Work-Based Learning
 - For learners
 - For employers
 - For schools
 - For the community
- The Career Development Continuum
- Work-Based Learning Essential Elements
- Work-Readiness Competencies
- Employer Participation Options

Quality Work-Based Learning

Introduction

This overview provides an introduction to the principles of Quality Work-Based Learning (WBL) and lays the foundation for developing any Work-Based Learning experience. The WBL Quality Standards and Essential Elements presented in this toolkit serve as an easy reference of things to pay attention to when creating high-quality, learning-rich experiences across the full continuum of Work-Based Learning activities.



Work-Based Learning experiences can have powerful impacts on learners¹ as they build their knowledge of potential careers, explore areas of interest and develop, practice and demonstrate new skills. They can also help provide relevance and help refocus attention and effort on academic and occupational learning in the classroom.

What is Quality Work-Based Learning?

Activities through which learners interact with employer partners., providing structured learning experiences in the workplace learners through exposure to a range of occupations and career options, and classroom or community activities that incorporate employers as speakers, advisors, instructors or career mentors. WBL allows learners to build a bridge from adolescent roles in the classroom to adult roles in professional settings. These interactions are most valuable when they occur at a workplace, or where learners are engaged in "live" interactions with employer partners.

Quality Work-Based Learning includes both remote and virtual options for most activities. Remote activities maintain learner and professional adult interaction via the use of technology, while virtual activities are generally simulations and provide employer exposures through recordings, online research and related classroom activities.

When offering remote and/or virtual options to learners, it is important to pay attention to technology access and equity in the distribution of opportunities in addition to ensuring the necessary permissions, protections and guidance are in place to promote learner safety.

Why Work-Based Learning?

High-quality Work-Based Learning provides opportunities for the acquisition of skills in three areas: academic, technical and work-readiness skills. Regardless of industry, employers consistently underscore that new workers must have experience and mastery in all three skill areas, with a growing priority on the development of work-readiness skills (sometimes referred to as professional or "soft skills). To support learners in developing these skills, authentic workplace experiences are important when combined with academic study, classroom training and other college and career-readiness activities. Guest Speakers, Career Days, Career Mentoring, Workplace Tours, Informational Interviews, Job Shadowing, Mock Interviews, Workplace Challenges, Internships and Work Experiences all provide real-world context and the opportunity to learn about the workplace and prepare for the future. Providing authentic workplace experiences and bringing employers into the classroom as part of the career development process can create powerful learning experiences and deepen the educational experience.

¹ Learners include K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

Work-Based Learning activities engage the employer as both a customer and a partner, providing developmental experiences for learners while helping build the future workforce. These experiences augment school-based classroom activities, offer the opportunity to learn about potential careers and allow learners to practice and demonstrate professional and defined work-readiness skills.

This toolkit has been developed to address the need to provide a range of high-quality opportunities to learners in the Earn & Learn community, and to help schools, workforce intermediaries and their employer and community partners deliver educationally rich and authentic Work-Based Learning experiences.

Benefits for Learners

Through Work-Based Learning activities, learners build awareness of potential careers in a particular industry, explore options and start preparing for their future. WBL provides opportunities for hands-on learning and the development of relationships with professional adult role models. Participating learners acquire experience and build work readiness and occupational skills while learning about the training or education required to succeed in specific careers. They are better able to understand real-world applications of academics and occupational training, and can answer the question, "Why do I need to learn this?".

By integrating a range of workplace exposures and experiences with school or classroom-based activities and guidance over time, learners will often set their sights higher than an immediate job and are likely to remain committed to their education through completion of their personal and career-related goals.

Benefits for Employers

Participation in Work-Based Learning offers an effective and appropriate vehicle for employers to help recruit, train, and retain their future workforce. Employers report increasing mismatch between the skills required for entry into their industry and those of most recent graduates. By opening their place of business to learners and providing high-value Work-Based Learning opportunities, employers can benefit from productive learner work or gain a new perspective on an issue or a problem. Employers can observe potential future employees in a "long-term interview" context and participate in shaping their future workforce also provide access to a customer resource and point of view.

An employer's existing workforce benefits from more productive and engaged employees and from the opportunity to offer leadership and supervisory skills development to its current workers. Participation provides an opportunity for companies to support local schools and help develop a highly skilled and productive future workforce. It builds awareness in the community of the employer's role in the local economy and offers a public relations benefit.

Benefits for Schools

Work-Based Learning extends the classroom to the workplace and brings employer volunteers into the school and classroom. It helps build awareness of industry-identified skills to incorporate, and validate, in the classroom curriculum among educators. It provides touchstones in authentic workplaces to help make classroom learning relevant and helps schools and programs build relationships with the community. WBL also provides opportunities for networking and relationship-building to promote future collaboration with employer partners.

Benefits for the Community

Work-Based Learning activities connect the community to schools and local economic

development efforts, promote civic engagement and help address community priorities and issues. Learners complete community projects and are visible as contributing members of society. They are growing to become a more productive and committed workforce.

Work-Based Learning Quality Standards

Quality Work-Based Learning is:

- Designed to promote enhanced learning, skill development and workplace awareness
- Structured to be effective, safe, legal and measurable
- Supported by appropriate planning, tailored training and efficient processes
- Connected to classroom learning, individual career development plans and sequenced education, training and additional Work-Based Learning activities

Quality Work-Based Learning is designed to promote enhanced learning, skill development and workplace awareness.

Work-Based Learning supports and enhances classroom instruction by providing a context for learning. It provides unique opportunities to practice and demonstrate new skills and assists in the development of workplace awareness. It helps build the skills required for specific occupations by exposing learners to the multiple career options available at a workplace. Work-Based Learning engages learners in their own education and skill development and provides multiple opportunities for reflection on the experience, both verbally and in writing.

Quality Work-Based Learning is structured to be effective, safe, legal, and measurable.

Work-Based Learning provides authentic and relevant "learning and doing" experiences that are safe, legal and in compliance with state, federal and local regulations. Learning objectives are met through ongoing assessment and continuous improvement activities. Systems are in place to support teachers, faculty and program staff in designing and implementing quality WBL experiences and to make it easy for employer and community partners to participate.

Quality Work-Based Learning is supported by appropriate planning, tailored training and efficient processes.

Work-Based Learning has defined services and procedures to manage expectations and foster communication among all partners. Learners are served through individualized learning plans defined for each experience and are prepared and supported throughout the experience. Part of this preparation is providing appropriate safety and health training for young workers and helping them understand their rights and responsibilities as employees. Employers and community partners receive support and training to enable their participation, and school staff are trained in how to design high-quality experiences.

Quality Work-Based Learning is connected to classroom learning, individual career development plans and sequenced education, training and workplace activities.

Work-Based Learning supports a community-wide vision and collective expectations for both academic and occupational learning. Experiences are designed to directly support academic and occupational learning, build core employability skills and provide a planned sequence of experiences that links academic concepts to real-world application. Learners are guided and supported by an individualized career development plan, where Work-Based Learning activities are sequenced and connected to the learner's next step.

Adapted from "Creating Quality Work-Based Learning", New Ways to Work © 1998, 2002, 2010, 2016, 2019, 2020

Career Development Continuum

Life is a constantly evolving story. As such, Career Development is most effective when learners² are provided a natural progression of activities that address career awareness, exploration and development. The Career Development Continuum is designed to help teachers/faculty and youth practitioners understand and implement an intentional and connected series of career development experiences for the young people they support.

All Earn & Learn community partners provide a sequenced continuum of career development activities and experiences that address Career Awareness, Career Exploration and Career Preparation. This is accomplished through the provision of a series of work-based classroom activities, community experiences and workplace exposure for all learners over time. While generally learners begin awareness activities at earlier ages or grade levels and progress through exploration and into preparation as they get older, there are cases where those who are younger participate in preparation activities, and conversely, where older learners would participate in an awareness activity. Work-Based Learning activities should align to the learner's stage of development and address defined career development objectives.

The Three Levels of the Career Development Continuum

Career Awareness

Career Awareness activities are designed to promote awareness of careers, workplace norms and employer expectations, as well as personal interests and aptitudes. In the workplace, Career Awareness activities include Career Mentoring and Workplace Tours.

- **Career Mentoring:** A Career Awareness activity in which a learner is matched one-on-one (or in small groups) with an adult professional to learn about potential careers and related educational and training requirements.
- **Workplace Tour:** A Career Awareness activity in which small groups of learners visit a workplace, learn about the business, meet employees, ask questions and observe work in progress.
- **Guest Speaker:** A Career Awareness activity in which learners listen to a presentation given by an adult professional to learn about the industry, career options within the industry and the specifics of particular occupations. Guest speakers may also support particular academic concepts with real-world applications.

"I understand what's out there and am discovering the kinds of things I might want to do."

Career Exploration

Career Exploration activities are designed to promote a deeper understanding of potential careers, and to provide opportunities for an investigation of a particular industry, career or occupation of interest. In the workplace, Career Exploration activities include Informational Interviews and Job Shadowing.

- **Informational Interview:** A Career Exploration activity in which a learner formally

² Learners include K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

interviews an adult professional in an area of career interest to learn about the industry, career options within the industry and the specifics of particular occupations.

- **Job Shadow:** A Career Exploration activity in which a learner is paired with an employee of a partner business and follows that employee during much of a regular workday. A Job Shadow provides learners the opportunity to experience the workplace, understand the various roles and duties of a particular occupation, learn about the business, connect with a working adult and observe work in progress.

"I'm interested in this field and am beginning to understand what it's all about and what I need to do to pursue a career in the industry."

Career Preparation

Career Preparation activities are designed to provide an in-depth discovery of a particular career, the development of occupational skills and promote an understanding of the education or training needed in a particular industry or occupation. In the workplace, Career Preparation activities include Workplace Challenges, Internships, Work Experience (including Co-Operative Work Experience) and Apprenticeships.

- **Workplace Challenge:** A Career Preparation activity where small groups of learners (four to six per team) are engaged in solving a real-world problem or a challenge issued by an employer. The challenge is identified by the employer in consultation with the work-based learning connector and a classroom teacher or faculty member. The structure of the challenge is based upon effective project-based learning approaches, enhanced by a focus on the targeted career pathway and an authentic problem or issue faced by an employer partner.
- **Work Experience:** A Career Preparation activity in which a learner is placed in a workplace doing real work for pay. They are held to the same expectations as all employees. The workplace supervisor conducts evaluations based on workplace expectations and performance. Learners have the opportunity to develop and demonstrate professional and occupational skills by addressing a core business function and doing productive work. In some cases, Work Experience is supported by specific classroom activities.
- **Internship:** A Career Preparation activity in which a learner is placed in a business for a defined period of time to participate in and observe work firsthand within a given industry. Internships are highly structured, time-limited experiences that occur at a worksite. Internships may be paid or unpaid, depending on whether the intern is performing productive work for the employer and other defined factors. Unlike work experience, internships often allow for work in teams, or a rotation through a number of departments and job functions.
- **Apprenticeship:** A Career Preparation activity designed to prepare an individual, generally a high school graduate, for a variety of careers, including the skilled crafts and trades. Apprenticeships consist of paid, on-the-job training supplemented by related classroom instruction. In California, apprenticeship training in more than 450 occupations is formally recognized by the state Division of Apprenticeship Standards.

"I know the kinds of things I want to do and am getting the chance to learn new skills and practice applying those skills."

Preparing All Youth For Success In College, Career and Life.

Students and young adults are provided a range of career development opportunities across the continuum through partnerships between their school or youth organization and employers and community or governmental organizations. This chart lists all of the activities across the continuum, whether they happen through structured learning in the classroom or workshops, activities in the community or through work-based learning in partnership with employers.



Work-Based Learning Essential Elements

Earn & Learn has identified a set of essential elements to support the implementation of all Work-Based Learning experiences. WBL Connectors, teachers and faculty can use these elements to help ensure that all activities are engaging, safe and learning rich.

- 1. Conduct Effective Planning**
 - ✓ Set clear goals and expectations for all parties.
 - ✓ Ensure activity is developmentally appropriate (age, stage and grade).
- 2. Prepare for Success**
 - ✓ Prepare learners³, teachers, faculty and employers.
 - ✓ Address logistics, including access to and use of appropriate technology.
- 3. Identify Learning Objectives**
 - ✓ Align to workplace competencies.
 - ✓ Link to classroom learning, college-readiness skills and academic standards.
- 4. Create Authentic and Engaging Experiences**
 - ✓ Support effective participation of employers.
 - ✓ Provide hands-on and project-based activities when possible.
- 5. Connect to Careers**
 - ✓ Provide for exploration of or experience in a field of interest and exposure to a range of potential career options.
 - ✓ Provide exposure to authentic work-world experiences.
- 6. Support Learner Growth**
 - ✓ Connect to an individualized career or training plan.
 - ✓ Scaffold with learner support and preparation.
- 7. Ensure Activities are Safe and Legal**
 - ✓ Address child labor laws, OSHA, Workers Compensation, and the Fair Labor Standards Act (including pay when required).
 - ✓ Reflect workplace norms, as well as technology use permissions, protections and guidance.
- 8. Provide Ongoing Support**
 - ✓ Provide orientations and support for all parties.
 - ✓ Ensure that Work-Based Learning is appropriately staffed.
- 9. Provide for Reflection, Presentation and Feedback**
 - ✓ Support learner self-assessment and presentation.
 - ✓ Provide opportunities for formal and informal feedback among all parties.
- 10. Connect to the Learner's Next Step**
 - ✓ Connect the experience to actionable next steps.
 - ✓ Intentionally sequence with future Work-Based Learning experiences.
- 11. Assess and Document the Experience**
 - ✓ Document learner progress.
 - ✓ Assess activity effectiveness.

³ Learners include K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

Work-Readiness Competencies⁴

The following Work-Readiness Competencies are a defined set of the core professional skills and behavioral competencies necessary for successful transition into the workplace. Earn & Learn has identified these skills as benchmarks of demonstrated cognitive development, effective interpersonal and decision-making skills, and self-confidence in the work environment. Combined with the necessary academic and occupational skills, demonstration of these professional skills indicates readiness for work.

Work-Readiness Competencies

1. Attendance
2. Timeliness
3. Workplace Appearance
4. Initiative and Self-Management
5. Quality of Work
6. Communication Skills
7. Response to Supervision
8. Collaboration and Teamwork
9. Comfort with Diversity
10. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving
11. Workplace Culture, Policy and Safety

Work-Readiness Competencies with Indicators

1. **Attendance**
 - ✓ Understands work expectations for attendance and adheres to them.
 - ✓ Notifies supervisor in advance in case of absence.
2. **Timeliness**
 - ✓ Understands work expectations for punctuality.
 - ✓ Arrives on time, takes and returns from breaks on time.
 - ✓ Informs supervisor prior to being late.
3. **Workplace Appearance**
 - ✓ Dresses appropriately for position and duties.
 - ✓ Wears safety gear when necessary.
 - ✓ Practices personal hygiene appropriate for position and duties.
4. **Initiative and Self-Management**
 - ✓ Takes initiative and participates fully in task or project.
 - ✓ Initiates interaction with supervisor for next task upon completion of previous one.
 - ✓ Identifies potential solutions or processes and proposes improvement strategies.
5. **Quality of Work**
 - ✓ Gives best effort, evaluates own work, and utilizes feedback to improve work performance.
 - ✓ Pays attention to detail and meets accepted quality standards.

⁴ These work readiness competencies were refined by educators, school leadership, workforce professionals and Earn&Learn team members, who reviewed a wide range of work-ready standards developed by educational and workforce institutions, private sector groups and government entities.

6. **Communication Skills**
 - ✓ Speaks and writes clearly and communicates effectively—verbally and in writing.
 - ✓ Listens attentively and responds appropriately.
 - ✓ Uses language appropriate to the work environment.
 - ✓ Asks questions.

7. **Response to Supervision**
 - ✓ Accepts direction, feedback, and constructive criticism with positive attitude and uses information to improve work performance.
 - ✓ Completes tasks as asked.

8. **Collaboration and Teamwork**
 - ✓ Relates positively with co-workers.
 - ✓ Works productively with individuals and with teams.
 - ✓ Asks for and offers assistance.

9. **Comfort with Diversity**
 - ✓ Respects diversity in race, gender, and culture.
 - ✓ Avoids the use of language that stereotypes others.

10. **Critical Thinking and Problem Solving**
 - ✓ Exercises sound reasoning and analytical thinking.
 - ✓ Uses knowledge and information from job to solve workplace problems.
 - ✓ Gives best effort, evaluates own work, and utilizes feedback to improve work performance.
 - ✓ Pays attention to detail and meets accepted quality standards.

11. **Workplace Culture, Policy and Safety**
 - ✓ Demonstrates understanding of workplace culture and policy.
 - ✓ Complies with health and safety rules and reports emergencies.
 - ✓ Provides a safe environment for customers and co-workers.
 - ✓ Exhibits work ethic, integrity, and honesty.

Employer Participation Options

Why Work-Based Learning?

Many learners⁵ crave relationships, real world experiences, and access to meaningful career paths beyond what's available in their immediate community. Employers desire a diverse talent pipeline that is ready for the workforce. Our education system and our employers will only align when we change the architecture of K-16 schools to embrace work-based learning and make it easy for them to collaborate. Work-based learning activities that help learners make informed choices, plan their educational pathway and provide actionable steps to take in school or training settings are vital to learner achievement and ultimately a positive connection to the labor force.

Additionally, WBL provides a lever to advance equity and opportunity in the workplace in the face of educational systems that have disadvantaged those who are racially and ethnically diverse, differently abled, and low-income. In addition to the career exposure and skills gained via Work-Based Learning, these experiences also connect learners and professionals who might not have been connected otherwise.

The Earn & Learn approach in supporting learners in career-related programs of study is the deliberate focus on the three facets of achievement needed for success in the labor force: the acquisition of academic, technical and core employability skills. Regardless of industry, employers consistently underscore that candidate must have experience and mastery in all three areas, with a growing priority on the development of employability skills. Alongside efforts to enhance the rigor and effectiveness of classroom instruction, the approach requires new ways to deliver authentic workplace experiences such as Career Days, Workplace Tours, Mock Interviews and Internships in partnership with employers. In some cases, these experiences can be delivered remotely or virtually with employer partners visiting remote classrooms or connecting with learners over online platforms.

Quality Work-Based Learning includes both remote and virtual options for most activities. Remote activities promote "live" learner contact with adult professionals and front-line workers via the use of technology. Virtual activities are generally simulations that provide learners with employer exposures through recordings, online research and related classroom activities.

What are the benefits of my company's participation?

Partnering with Earn & Learn offers you an effective and appropriate vehicle to help build and retain your future workforce. By opening your place of business to learners and providing them with high-value Work-Based Learning opportunities, you are able to expose young people to your business and industry and benefit from productive work. You and others on your team can observe potential future employees in a "long-term interview" context and participate in shaping their future workforce by connecting with teachers or faculty members and participating in the classroom. Interactions with learners also provide you access to a customer resource and a fresh point of view.

Your workplace benefits from a more productive and engaged workforce and by helping build leadership and supervisory skills among your current workers. Partnering with Earn & Learn provides a win-win opportunity to support and develop highly skilled and valuable

⁵ Learners include K-12, community college and college students; youth and young adults engaged in workforce development programs; and adults participating in career development activities.

employees. It also helps build awareness of your company's role in the community and offers a public relations benefit.

Why is Work-Based Learning important for learners, schools and my community?

- **It fast tracks learners to their personal career goals.** learners pursue their education focused on their long-term goals. They graduate with a diploma or certificate, direct workplace experience with partner employers and a firm foundation for entry into the workforce or future educational and training opportunities.
- **It promotes better outcomes for schools and colleges and increases graduation and college completion rates.** This approach helps schools and colleges deliver a 21st century education. The structure provides multiple pathways for learners, incentives for project-based and applied learning. It offers learners the chance to explore a career path while preparing them to become contributing members of their community. And it increases educator knowledge of area businesses and jobs as well as an understanding of the challenges industry faces.
- **It strengthens communities.** It helps align education, workforce and service systems to promote a strong economic future and build a better engaged citizenry. It provides a robust local talent pipeline and helps the local economy grow and retain a workforce.

How can my company participate?

There are many ways in which you can partner with us. While employer involvement in each of the following activities is critical to our success, employer partners are not expected to participate in all activities. Work-based learning connectors will work with you to help select the activities that make the most sense for your business.

Here are some options to consider:

- Serve on an Industry Advisory Board
- Help us map the skills needed for high demand occupations in your industry
- Provide Work-Based Learning opportunities for learners. These may include:
 - **Guest Speaker** – A group of learners listen to a presentation to learn about the speaker's organization, careers and industry and ask questions to help them consider whether they might like to pursue an opportunity in the industry.
 - **Career Day** – Business partners from a variety of companies come together at a school to share information about their company, their job and the education and skills required for success in careers in the industry.
 - **Career Mentoring** – A learner is matched one-on-one or in small groups with an adult professional to explore potential careers and related educational issues.
 - **Workplace Tour** – Small groups of learners visit a workplace, learn about the business, meet employees, ask questions and observe work in progress. Teachers and faculty also benefit from exposure to the workplace.
 - **Informational Interview** – A learner formally interviews an employer partner about his or her industry, educational and career path and profession.
 - **Job Shadowing** – A learner is paired with an employee of a host company and follows that employee during much of a regular workday.
 - **Mock Interview** – Learners are paired one-on-one with a business partner who interviews them as if he/she were being interviewed by an employer for a paid internship or job.

- **Workplace Challenge** – Small groups of learners (four to six per team) are engaged in a problem-solving exercise issued by an employer in consultation with a teacher or faculty member.
- **Internship** – A learner has the opportunity to learn by doing real work and being productively engaged in the workplace. Learners may work individually, in teams, work on a project, or rotate through a number of departments and job functions.
- **Work Experience** – An opportunity for a learner to develop and demonstrate professional and occupational skills by addressing a core business function and doing productive work with an employer.

We make it easy for you to get involved.

We offer strategies and support to limit the burden on employers and increase the educational value of these experiences. All workplace experiences are highly structured and supported by Earn & Learn partner staff. While the full range of authentic work-based learning experiences is provided to every learner, employer partners provide those opportunities that are a good fit with their business.

To learn more, visit <https://earnlearn.us/engage>

Or

Email us today: info@earnlearn.us