

Central Community School District Work Based Learning Plan

May, 2023

District Vision:

Central will be a safe and caring environment equipped with educators and technology that support 21st century learning through collaboration and innovative thinking. With the involvement of the communities, Central will develop lifelong learners and prepare each student to live as a productive, respectful, healthy, responsible citizen of the world.

Goals of Work Based Learning at Central:

- To create partnerships between students and businesses to solve real world problems facing local enterprises to give students practical experiences
- To give students exposure to a variety of career and employment fields to help them make informed decisions about their futures
- To expose students to work situations in order to develop employability skills such as collaboration, communication, flexibility, accountability and problem solving.

Section 1: Executive Summary:

The Central Community School District strives to prepare every student for life after high school. Our Work Based Learning program incorporates academic knowledge, technical expertise and employability skills to help students forge a path to a rewarding career. The program's goal is to connect learning to doing through a series of incremental steps that ultimately get students into the workplace. Career awareness starts very early in a student's academic career so they have the knowledge and skills to pursue their passions and goals as they advance to high school.

As we prepare students for the next phase we must also balance the needs of our local community by working closely with industry professionals to constantly update what students are learning and where our attentions are focused. This requires a close partnership between industry, business, community and school. A major focus of Central's Work Based Learning Program is to build relationships between students and teachers and the business community within our district. These relationships form the cornerstone of the program and are important as they make young people aware of the needs and opportunities available in the community workforce and make the workplace community aware of the skills, aspirations and personalities of the next generation of workers. Students and employers can use these relationships to build an understanding and to move students more quickly into the workforce.

The early focus of our Work Based Learning Program is on career awareness. Career awareness education begins in preschool and continues through grade 12. Exposing students to a variety of occupations within the classroom and through off campus visits helps students build awareness

of the vast career opportunities that are available and helps them find a career that matches their interests and passions.

The second phase of our Work Based Learning Program will continue to build awareness and add career exploration. This part of the program will ramp up as students reach grade 7 and continue through grade 12. The junior high exploratory experience will allow students to have prolonged exposure to a variety of careers within many different clusters to build student understanding of future work opportunities. These opportunities will allow students to grow their knowledge and employability skills.

The final phase of the Work Based Learning Program will be professional experiences. This phase will begin in high school. These experiences can include job shadowing, partnering with businesses to problem solve, on the job training, classroom simulations and much more. Experience allows students the opportunity to actually do the work of the career they are interested in rather than just watch the career in action. This phase is important as student career knowledge increases and they become more aware of their skills and passions. Both positive and negative experiences can help students make better future choices and to grow as future professionals.

Awareness, exposure and experience will help give students purpose and direction as they continue to move toward a future career and make the classes we offer more relevant and interesting. We strive for every student to have the tools they need to develop their potential and become a productive citizen of the world.

Section 2: Three Core Essentials

K-12 Work Based Learning Options

Elementary Grade Levels (K-6)

The elementary classes focus mostly on career awareness. Guest speakers are a large part of this including a Community Helpers exploration with public servants such as police officers and firefighters and community volunteers that lead a Junior Achievement program for all grade levels for example. Classes also take field trips and trips are arranged for small groups to visit local businesses and participate in an activity through our Worthy Warrior program. Students selected as the Worthy Warrior might visit the bakery and bake something with them or go to an animal shelter, the local florist or a farm. In addition to these, elementary students often read about various careers and then have conversations to increase their career exposure. Students also take “specials” classes where they explore computer science, STEM topics, art and music. Each of these areas also touch on career interests. Students in upper elementary have access to email and begin to learn about professional communications and other employability skills. The upper grades also work on STEM problem solving challenges with the help of the Future Ready Iowa Clearinghouse. While these activities currently are not meeting all three essential elements for Work Based Learning, with a little professional development each

grade level teacher could make small changes to make these experiences true Work Based Learning.

Junior High Grade Levels(7-8)

As students transition to junior high school they take a deeper dive into many of the career clusters. In both seventh and eighth grades students have exploratory classes in the following areas:

1. Agriculture
2. Art
3. Computer Science
4. Health
5. Industrial Technology
6. Music Appreciation
7. Outdoor Recreation
8. Spanish

Each of these areas teaches students the skills associated with the area but also helps students build career awareness within each field. Guest speakers working in various fields as well as field trips are a part of the exploratory experience.

In addition to exploratory classes students also participate in Central's Leadership and Service program called Central LEAD. This class is designed around Maslow Hierarchy of Needs and employability skills. Within the LEAD program students work on small group projects that benefit the school or community in some way. Students work closely with community leaders and business people to set and achieve goals while building their leadership, communication and problem solving skills.

Junior high students are also assessed on employability skills in every class they take. Each junior high teacher has selected one employability skill that they regularly assess and explicitly teach to junior high students. This skill is a part of the overall grade in all subject areas.

In eighth grade students take their first assessments with Kuder Navigator to help them assess their attitudes, aptitudes, interests and skills related to career exploration. Students also attend a career fair where the students are guided to ask appropriate questions to further their learning and understanding of a career such as what education is needed for this career, what is required to do this job, etc..

High School Grade Levels (9-12)

As students enter high school they begin to narrow their focus and start to build more real career experiences. Students in 10-12 grade are required to take two classes that help students focus their career planning. **Pre-Employment Strategies** presents practical strategies that prepare students to identify an appropriate career, conduct a successful job search, and build the foundation for successful career development. Job shadows and

resumes are key components of this course, along with participation in mock interviews. **Personal Finance** introduces students to personal money management. Emphasis is placed on banking accounts (checking, savings, and money market accounts), loans, investments, budgeting, and income tax calculations. Additional emphasis is placed on consumer protection, credit cards, and insurance. Both of these required courses get students thinking about career choice and life after high school.

Beyond the required classes there are many elective choices that students can choose to help narrow their career focus. Our CTE programs are very strong and offer students not only rigorous academic courses but also real world experiences through student organizations, industry simulations, competitions, field trips and much more. Through our agricultural science classes students study everything from farming to conservation to food science. Supervised Agricultural Experiences allow students to get hands-on experience in many fields of agriculture. Independent Agriculture allows students to follow their passions and give back to the community through project based learning. We have a very active FFA Chapter that attends and plans many events, contests and competitions that give students career and leadership opportunities. Our Industrial Technology allows students to cover all material for several industry level certifications before they graduate such as Blueprint Reading, OSHA, and Gas Metal Arc Welding. In addition students have the opportunity to participate in competitions, simulators and industry tours that have hands-on components. The Industrial Technology department works closely with local businesses to give students an authentic learning experience and was the recipient of a STEM BEST HD Award for Advanced Manufacturing. Our Business Department offers college level accounting and computer data courses that teach skills needed in virtually all careers. The Business teacher is also MOC certified and oversees our On the Job Training program that gives students the opportunity to gain career experience in an authentic setting. All of our CTE teachers work closely with NICC to offer college level programing and career counseling.

In addition to the CTE strands above, Central Community Schools has a contract with NICC for the Health Academy. The Health Academy offers eight courses for students interested in health sciences. Students can take a Nurses Aide course where upon successful completion of this course and clinicals students will be eligible for state licensing. These courses are taught by our school nurse and other NICC instructors.

Other career course options for students include Clayton County BEST. Clayton County BEST is a project based course that partners students with businesses and organizations within the community to solve real world problems. This program was created through a STEM BEST award from the Governor's STEM Advisory Council. Student work is assessed based on employability standards and students learn project management skills along with self reflection. Central Perk is a student-run coffee shop opened and operated by members of Clayton County BEST. Clayton County BEST allows students to have first hand experience with careers that might be outside of the CTE strands we offer. This class may also be taken for college credit through NICC as Workplace Project Based Learning (WBL:140).

Our Art program has a career focus with the Workshop Wednesday program that brings working artists from a variety of backgrounds into the classroom to help students work through a project. This is a hands-on experience where students are given the opportunity to work alongside an artist and to ask questions about the artist's career path and work.

Students also have the opportunity to spend time during the day engaged in our Student Office Service (SOS). Through this program students choose to work with a teacher or other building professional to assist with their job. Students may be helping with younger students exploring a career in education, helping in district offices with the secretarial or nursing staff or even helping the custodial staff with day to day projects. Each student is assigned to an adult for the semester and they are assessed on employability skills. It is up to the adult to oversee the student and to teach them the skills needed to successfully carry out the tasks.

In addition to coursework our students also have the opportunity to visit NICC Peosta Campus as a freshman class trip. They interact with various departments and are able to ask questions. As seniors they participate in a real live simulation called "Reality Check" Students go through a pre-event process that involves selecting a career and then they earn a salary and have to budget their living expenses accordingly. We hope to add events for the sophomore and junior students in the future.

In the 2022-2023 school year Central created a mentorship program for all 9-12 grade students. The goal of this program is to pair each student with a school employee that will mentor the student with career and college planning and help the student build a mentor team that includes family and community members. This program is in the beginning stages but we are excited to see where it goes. The program has helped encourage all district team members to be aware of their important role in preparing our students for the future.

With a growth mindset there are always areas that we are focusing on to expand our work based learning program including professional development about the essential elements of work based learning, how to effectively teach and assess twenty first century employability skills and investigating internship and apprenticeship opportunities for students.

Businesses, Nonprofits and Employers

The Central Community School District has built strong partnerships with many local businesses and organizations. Our school is a vital part of the community as a whole and is given a great deal of support in return. Through our STEM BEST, CTE, NICC College and Career Connections and other authentic learning opportunities we have built a large and varied network of business partners. Various teachers and administrators work to continue to grow these partnerships each day. We have also had a lot of success encouraging businesses and organizations to reach out to the school with opportunities for students to interact in the

workplace. A future endeavor will be to consolidate the businesses and organizations into a WBL Database for all educators to access. We have utilized the Future Ready Iowa site to increase our partner reach. The key to building these partnerships has been effectively communicating current partnerships to the community at large. By advertising what we have done with current partners we peak the community interest and get new partners excited about collaborating with us. We achieve this through social media, mainstream local media and in person and digital presentations that share the great work our students have done with local businesses.

Professional Development

We are currently working to build a Professional Development model that helps PK-12 teachers make small changes to current career learning activities in order to make them true WBL experiences without a lot of extra time or work. Many of our activities are lacking one of the three key essential elements of Work Based Learning (Academic Preparation, Partnership Between Education and Industry and Academic Follow up). Usually this is because the teacher is simply unaware of the three components necessary to move career exploration into work based learning. The three components of WBL is an area that can be addressed with our PK-12 staff during professional development time.

Through a STEM BEST Enhancement Award our Clayton County BEST Program developed a [Business Partner Handbook](#) using the Future Ready Iowa Business Partner Toolkit and Iowa Department of Education Work-Based Learning Guide. This handbook is used to help Business Partners understand their role in Work Based Learning and the best practices for working with students. The handbook is given to all new partners and used to guide discussions.

Section 3: Staffing

While all teaching staff in grades K-12 will play a vital role in the success of a comprehensive district wide Work Based Learning Program there are some staff that will play larger roles. As a small district we have chosen to spread the responsibility among several staff to lessen the impact of any one person having a role change. Here are the key players.

- K-12 Instructional Coach
 - This position oversees the work based learning program and keeps records of what is being done at each level.
 - Assist in grant writing to procure funding.
 - Connect teachers to businesses and organizations if needed
- MOC Certified teacher
 - This position will oversee the current On the Job Training Program
 - This position will also oversee any future internship or certified apprenticeship programs
- K-12 Guidance Counselor
 - This position work with students to complete the ICAP / Kuder Navigator
 - Gather and collect data about graduation requirements, future plans and Schedules WBL visits.
- Instructors in the following areas:

- Clayton County BEST Instructor runs the STEM BEST program and works to partner students with businesses and community organizations to solve real world problems.
- Business Instructor is a part time position that oversees the teaching of required Pre employment strategies and personal finance classes. Also helps to organize job shadow opportunities and mock interviews as well as teaching concurrent NICC business classes.
- Other instructors who provide specific career exploration and experiences including but not limited to:
 - K-12 Computer Science (part time)
 - Health Consortium (current school nurse and online instructors)
 - 7-12 Agriculture Education (recently made full time)
 - 7-12 Industrial Technology / Certified Welding Instructor (recently made full time)
 - K-12 Art
 - K-6 Makerspace

Section 4: Costs and Funding

Most costs are associated with staffing or equipment for specific programs. Funding has come primarily from three sources: School budget, Grant funding and Company support.

Currently the district is covering the cost of staffing with some help from the Teacher Leader Compensation monies for the Instructional Coaching Position.

Equipment costs for certain areas have been offset by utilizing grants and other funding streams. We have utilized monies from Perkins, STEM BEST, STEM Scaleup, McElroy Trust, Clayton County Foundation for the Future and NICC Compensation to purchase equipment and consumables necessary to continue the program.

Making use of community partners supports the third funding stream. In the past we have also relied on businesses such as Mobile Track Solutions to provide certified staff for certain areas such as Gas Metal Arc Welding or to complete tasks such as metal painting that we can not. Other professionals have volunteered time to help install purchased equipment, meet with students and lead lessons. Partners have also donate equipment that they no longer utilize.

Section 5: Community Assets

- Northeast Iowa Community College
 - College and Career Coaching
 - College and Career Connection Opportunities
 - Concurrent Classes
 - Compensation Money
- Iowa Intermediary Network

- Keystone Area Education Agency
- Iowa Governor's STEM Advisory Council
- Elkader Chamber and Economic Development
- Main Street Elkader
- Clayton County Development Group
- Authentic Learning Network
- Iowa Workforce Development

The above organizations are instrumental in building the relationships within the community for our program to thrive. They provide support, resources and often an intermediary between the school and business community. Our district's stakeholders are a huge asset to our program; the students, families and community members who are willing to work together to make this a success and see value in work based learning.

Section 6: ICAP Utilization

Each student's Individual Career and Academic Plan (ICAP) is an important part of Work Based Learning. Our students and K-12 school counselors utilize Kuder Navigator in grades 8-12. Each year students take three surveys concerning Career Interest, Career Confidence and Workplace Values. The results of these surveys are then used to investigate careers and post secondary education possibilities. With the help of Kuder Navigator and the survey results students form a four year plan before registering for their freshman year. Each year the plan is revisited and updated based on the survey results. As senior year approaches each prospective graduate and his or her parents has an interview with the counselor where their ICAP is reviewed and their future plans are discussed. The counselor uses all of this information to help students make informed decisions about what classes to take and other to target students with other work based learning opportunities.

Section 7: Perkins Alignment

Many components of our Work Based Learning Program include our Career and Technical programs and their associated student based organizations. At this time Perkins funds are used to support these programs while other work based learning opportunities utilize different funding streams.

Section 8: Challenges and Barriers

As with any educational initiative there are always challenges and barriers to overcome. As we developed our Work Based Learning plan the following topics are areas of concern.

1. Maintaining an MOC

Due to the small size of our district it is often necessary for one person to wear many hats. Finding a person with freedom in their schedule to do the MOC position is a challenge. Having multiple people in the district certified would be a goal so as positions

change we have multiple options for staffing. Currently with only one staff person certified it is leading to time and supervision issues that are limiting our possibilities.

2. Hiring and Maintaining CTE teachers in all areas

This has been a frustration for several years in many districts. Hiring Computer Science, Business, Agriculture, Family and Consumer Science, Industrial technology, etc. teachers has become difficult. It is also difficult to maintain full time positions in each of these. This has required districts such as ours to make difficult and sometimes creative decisions. We are very fortunate to have the CTE staff that we have but positions and teachers constantly change. Keeping up with these changes can be difficult.

3. Student and Stakeholder Awareness and buy in

Hopefully this will be the easiest barrier to overcome. Change is hard for everyone but especially for students. Students need to be willing to have a mind shift away from the status quo and be willing to try new opportunities and take new classes that stretch their skills. Community stakeholders also need to be proactive change agents as we move forward. We are very fortunate to have a growth mindset student body and community.

As we move forward with Work Based Learning more time and energy will need to be spent on these endeavors. This will require a sustained commitment from K-12 teachers, administration, school board and community. Verbal commitment alone is not enough, moving forward requires actions and allocation of resources that demonstrate the importance of Work Based Learning in the Central Community District. Producing the future workforce takes the effort of all stakeholders involved and we will all reap the benefit of a job well done.