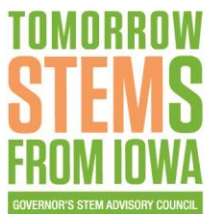




**Sheldon Community School District
Work Based Learning Plan
May 1, 2023**

“To prepare all learners to be productive citizens.”



Executive Summary

Sheldon Community School District is a public school district that serves students in preschool through 12th grade. The district includes the communities of Sheldon, Archer, Ashton, and Matlock and serves approximately 1100 students. The school campus is located in Sheldon, which has a population of about 5,428 people. Our northwest Iowa community has a strong agricultural and manufacturing history that has provided traditional family values and community support for our schools.

The school district is committed to continuing to support our students to achieve academically, grow personally, and develop as productive citizens. Just like many areas in Iowa, we are experiencing shifts in our demographics that challenge us to continue to innovate to provide the best experiences for our students and their families. Our community values a strong work ethic and our school, particularly our high school, has long worked with community partners to provide relevant work experiences for our students. As the needs of our students and community become more diverse, we have become more focused on creating intentional, cohesive, work based learning experiences that prepare our students for the world they live in.

As we develop these experiences, we keep in mind the following goals:

→ **Program Goal : Career Ready Students**

- ◆ We strive to provide students with a wide range of career experiences that offer the students a chance to learn valuable personal and professional skills that will help them be successful in the workplace.

→ **Program Goal: School and Community Connections**

- ◆ We recognize that our community partners have workplace goals and need qualified workers to achieve them. We also recognize that our students need relevant work based experiences to fully develop themselves. We will facilitate the process necessary to achieve both those goals.

→ **Program Goal: Career Exploration**

- ◆ Students often do not know the breadth of career possibilities available to them and specifically those careers that are available in their communities. We will provide a range of opportunities to help students explore and develop their career interests.

→ **Program Goal: Value Added Experiences**

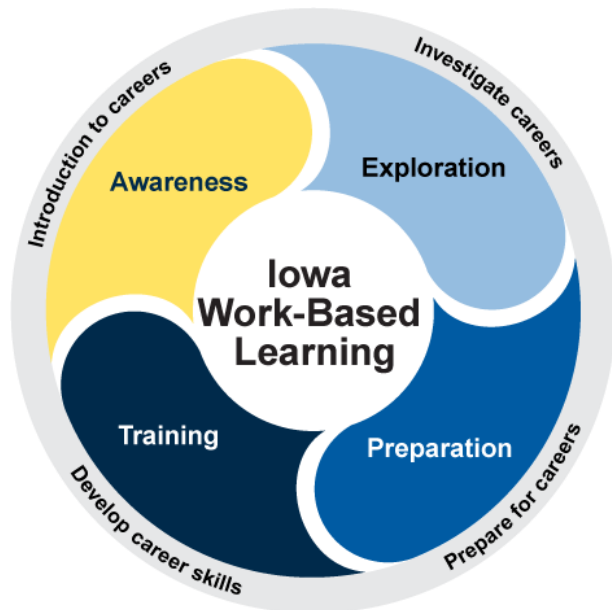
- ◆ It is a little more effort for businesses to offer and support student experiences that will help our students to be successful in our community. It is our goal that both the businesses and students find value in the work based learning experiences.

→ **Program Goal: Community Development**

- ◆ It is in everyone's best interest to keep our community growing and thriving. Building in these experiences will ultimately keep our community vibrant and healthy for our future.

Program Core Essentials

As we consider the development of work based learning experiences for all our students, the Work Based Continuum model provided by the Iowa Department of Education provides a way of understanding various types of work based learning. While we often think of work based learning as something that happens at the high school and focuses on placing students with businesses, this model emphasizes the progression of experiences that we can offer our students at all levels with various degrees of intensity. The following information comes from the [Iowa Work Based Learning Guide](#).



→ **Awareness**: Students are introduced to career clusters and specific careers through classroom speakers, tours, and career events.

→ **Exploration**: Students have the opportunity to explore careers through authentic projects, career-based service learning, interactive career events, workplace exploratory events, and job shadows.

→ **Preparation**: Students learn specific skills that can help them in the workplace such as with skill workshops and school-based enterprises.

→ **Training**: Students participate in the workplace through internships and apprenticeship programs.

In addition to the guidance provided by the preceding model, we also recognize that quality work based learning experiences do not happen in isolation. In order for students to fully benefit work based learning, the experiences need to include the three essential elements listed below.

→ Academic Preparation

- ◆ Before the work based learning experience, the students should have the opportunity to learn about the community partner and the careers they will be exploring. The students should be prepared to be successful prior to the experience happening.

→ Partnership Between Education and Industry

- ◆ During the work based learning experience, the students should be involved with professionals in the career field. Students are encouraged to communicate directly with the industry partner staff and develop a professional connection with industry partners. The students should experience the work environment first-hand.

→ Academic Follow-Up

- ◆ After the work based learning experience, a reflection or other assessment should be facilitated to summarize the experience. Documentation of the participation of the work based learning experience may be necessary and tying the experience back to the student's plan (ICAP) may help determine next steps. If necessary, the student may demonstrate any professional skills learned from the experience.

Work Based Learning Options

In the process of writing this document, we created a committee to share our current reality and assess our progress towards a strong work based learning program for our district. While we have many great things in place, we recognize areas of improvement. We need:

- to articulate our vision for work based learning opportunities from kindergarten through high school,
- share this vision with the staff, and
- record what is happening throughout the district to ensure that students receive a variety of experiences that are developmentally appropriate and grow in sophistication as the students grow.

We became aware of some gaps and overlaps, as well as many experiences that have the potential to be great work based learning with some minor adjustments. The following descriptions begin with what we currently have in place and then share how we hope to improve. Whether the committee that was created for the development of this document remains to support this work, or the work is taken on by an existing committee remains to be determined.

Sheldon High School

**The mission of the Sheldon High School is to prepare all learners to be productive citizens
Right to the Last Child.**

Sheldon's work based learning experiences at the high school level strive to give students the opportunities to learn about careers, explore the work that different professions engage in, develop the technical and durable skills to will them be successful, and to get hands-on training with different employers. An awareness of the Future Ready framework reminds us that students need preparation to be successful academically, socially, and in the workplace. Teachers are asked to make this work a priority as students near high school graduation. **At this level, this work will focus on helping students narrow down their interests and develop the skills necessary to be successful in their chosen career.**

The high school has an advantage in this task due to the ability for students to individualize their schedules to match their goals and engage in classes with the specific purpose of preparing them for life, including their future careers. Opportunities available for all students include those listed below. In all cases, the school seeks community members to work with the class to inform and coach our students about different careers and how to be successful in those careers.

- Career fairs are provided for sophomores and juniors, sponsored by the O'Brien County Economic Development and Northwest Iowa Community College respectively.
- The financial literacy class incorporates job shadows, resume writing, and mock interviewing with community members providing feedback.

Sheldon provides career and technical education (CTE) in the areas of business, family and consumer science, manufacturing, and agriculture. These classes, along with our other elective and core classes have been challenged to connect with local businesses for tours, speakers, and projects. The challenge was accepted and we have been able to partner with many community businesses that expand the opportunities for exploration of careers and preparation of related skills.

- Each of the CTE areas has a related career and technical student organization (CTSO) that provides opportunities to attend regional, state, and national conventions, tour businesses, and bring in speakers as both club activities and as part of the curriculum of those classes.
- The list of partners in these programs is extensive and includes Rosenboom, Maintainer, Demco, M&D Construction, and Stensland Dairy, among others. Other classes have either toured or brought speakers in from POET Biorefinery, Sekisui Aerospace, TransOva, Beck Engineering, various branches of the military, and more.
- Supervised Ag Experiences
- The art teacher has updated the graphic design curriculum and seeks out community partners for design projects and has included the White Wolf Web company as one of its partners.
- Specific work-based learning classes that are offered include Career Pathways and CAPS. Career Pathways allows students the opportunity to explore different careers with several extended job shadows in a variety of settings. CAPS coaches students in developing durable skills and gives them the opportunity to develop those skills through training led by

representatives from area businesses and collaborative projects with businesses and organizations.

A recent undertaking of the high school has been to expand opportunities for students to participate in internships and apprenticeship programs. A goal of this work has been to provide a spectrum of experiences so that they are available to a wider range of students.

- The Work Experience class allows students to be placed as an assistant in a workplace during open times in their schedule. This work is unpaid but does provide a credit for the student. Students are often placed as assistants to a teacher but it can include other workplaces as well.
- An extension to the classroom experience that students may get in Work Experience class is the Para to Teacher program for high school students. For this class, students are paid to work as paraprofessionals during open times in their schedule.
- A relatively new opportunity for our students is the ORAB Internship class. This class provides students with several weeks of on-boarding training and then places students in a partnering business or organization for 10 to 12 weeks. This program strives to match students with placements in their interest area and may be paid or unpaid.
- An intensive experience available for students who know they want to be a welder is the Welding Apprenticeship offered by the Northwest Iowa Community College (NCC). This is a two year program that provides welding classes through NCC and incorporates paid work with partner businesses and certifications at the end of the program.

With these activities already in place, we plan to improve our programming in the following ways.

- We will have teachers extend the current learning experiences by asking our speakers and hosts to share about their careers and other careers in their industry, being sure to include the appropriate preparation and follow up as well.
- We will share with students about our careers and the career paths we have taken.
- As a *Leader In Me* district, we will incorporate work based learning experiences and reflection into digital Student Leadership notebooks.
- In an effort to make planning work based experiences more accessible and avoid redundancy, we will create a document that records and organizes the work based experiences provided to our students and potential contacts for scheduling work based learning activities.
- We will increase communication and collaboration between the different stakeholders in this work to improve the articulation of goals and experiences and be sure we have an accurate, cohesive picture of the opportunities available to students.

Sheldon Middle School

Sheldon Middle School will prepare all students with the academic, social, and emotional skills needed to be successful. Our caring, devoted staff will provide a developmentally appropriate curriculum, which empowers students and puts students' needs first.

Sheldon Middle School is a 5-8 building that supports students on their work-based learning journey. **At this level, we envision a focus on discovery of careers and revealing student interests.** Teachers in many of the classes partner with community members to enrich learning experiences for students and expose them to aspects of various careers. Current partners include the Sheldon Museum, O'Brien County Conservationists and Naturalist, and science fair mentors. Several classes integrate experiences learning job related skills such as programming and blueprint reading. Our Tech class offers career modules. Whole grade speakers give students an opportunity to learn about different peoples' experiences and the paths of their lives. As students get closer to high school, they are able to learn about interests and careers using YouScience and MAP. Special guests from Northwest Iowa Community College speak to our English Language Learners about future opportunities and all 8th graders attend a Career Day. *Leader in Me* continues to be an important influence at the middle school by providing opportunities to talk about workplace skills around the 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The *Leader In Me* program also challenges staff to think about ways students can demonstrate leadership and take on jobs around the school to help them explore strengths and potential roles.

With these activities already in place, we plan to improve our programming in the following ways.

- We will have teachers extend the learning by asking our speakers and hosts to share about their careers and other careers in their industry, being sure to include the appropriate preparation and follow up as well.
- We will share with students about our careers and the career paths we have taken.
- As a *Leader In Me* district, we will invite families and community members into our building and share related work based learning.
- We will look for opportunities to connect the curriculum to work based learning experiences.

East Elementary

The mission of East Elementary is to prepare all students to be self-confident learners. The child-centered, enthusiastic, dedicated staff, in cooperation with family and community, will provide an appropriate well-defined curriculum through rich, varied experiences to meet individual needs in an accepting and nurturing environment.

Our work based learning opportunities start at East Elementary. **At this level, we envision a focus on connections to our community.** Currently, we have speakers from partner organizations or go on tours to various regional sites including the zoo, the fire station, the dentist, the Sheldon Museum, and various banks. Partnerships with Iowa State Extension and Siouxland Ag give students exposure to agriculture related careers including the Adopt a Cow and Agriculture in the Classroom programs. Our high school FFA students also host a Farm Safety Day for our second grade students. We take advantage of area conservation centers by taking field trips to Mill Creek, Lake Pahoja, Oak Grove, and the Ocheyedan County Conservation Center, in addition to guest speakers from the O'Brien County Conservation Center. Our students read with residents of Village Northwest Unlimited, which is a social services organization that provides care and support to adults with disabilities. In addition to this, Sheldon is a *Leader In Me* district. *Leader in Me* is a development program based on Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. This program develops student leaders, and as part of the program, develop skills of self-awareness and other-awareness, as well as take on various leadership jobs in the school.

With these activities already in place, we plan to improve our programming in the following ways.

- We will have teachers extend the learning by asking our speakers and hosts to share about their careers and other careers in their industry, being sure to include the appropriate preparation and follow up as well.
- We will look at filling some gaps in our experiences by grade level, and possibly including a careers focus on one of the four reading days the school holds or a separate Career Day.
- We will share with students about our careers and the career paths we have taken.
- As a *Leader In Me* district, we will invite families and community members into our building and share related work based learning.

Recruitment, On-Boarding, and Development of Community Partners

The Sheldon school district actively recruits community partners to strengthen and expand our work based learning program. Efforts are primarily focused on face-to-face and small group interactions. School representatives share with community partners about our work based learning opportunities and invite those partners to work with us. These conversations take place at community gatherings such as chamber meetings, social organization meetings, and school events. They also take place during personal conversations with family, friends, and business professionals in an effort to connect those connected to us with these opportunities. After an initial contact, a more thorough meeting is scheduled so the details of any cooperative work can be reviewed. As these conversations are had, the contact information is recorded in a spreadsheet to make future partnerships easier to facilitate.

Social and other media is used to share the great things happening in our district to let others know the options available. We especially like to highlight the community partners who cooperate with our schools through these means. The district has recently hired a social media manager who posts on behalf of the school on school social media pages. This has helped increase the amount of posts coming from the school and the quality of those posts. Individual programs such as CAPS also have social media presences that promote the specific opportunities in those programs. The school also invites our local media including KIWA Radio, the *Sheldon Mail Sun*, and *The Review* to talk about our programs.

Professional Development of Staff

A significant initiative in our district has been the implementation of the *Leader in Me* program. This program is based on Stephen Covey's *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. Through this program, students are taught about the seven habits in a way that helps develop students' abilities to lead themselves and lead others. The program combines academic goals with leadership and culture goals. The accompanying training for the staff helps support teachers as they encourage these important skills in our students to help them be ready for the workplace. In addition to this program, Northwest Area Education Agency offers sessions, resources, and coaches for guidance counselors, administrators, and teachers wanting to increase work based learning opportunities. Our Teacher Leadership program provides instructional coaches in our district who support teachers in this work as well. Career and Technical Education teachers attend state and national conferences related to their programs and their related student organizations to build their programs and provide even more opportunities for their students.

Staffing

The development and support of Sheldon Community School's work based learning plan is dependent on a team of individuals who strive to facilitate and grow these experiences.

Role	Team Members
District Administrators	Cory Myer, Superintendent Sherrie Zeutenhorst, High School Principal Cindy Barwick, Middle School Principal Jason Groendyke, Elementary Principal
School Counselors	Shelby Bosma, High School Counselor Sarah Nelson, Middle School Counselor Kevin White, Middle School Counselor Bailey Hennings, Elementary Counselor
Work Based Learning Coordinators	Amanda DeGroot, Work Based Learning Coordinator Cindy Prewitt, Instructional Coach and CAPS Instructor
CTE teachers	Emily Popkes, Human Services Jacob Fox, Agriculture and Natural Resources Amanda De Groot, Business Brice Montgomery, Applied Science, Technology, Engineering, and Manufacturing Jason Uhl, Art
Teachers	Megan Fitzgerald, Kindergarten Kaitlin Bechler, 2nd grade Marci Cabrera, Middle School Art and Computer Larie DeGroot, Tech and Physical Education Toby Maggert, High School Math and Computer Sam Martin, High School Language Arts
Post Secondary Teachers, Staff, and Administration	Leah Murphy, Dean of Arts and Sciences/Business and Health Sarah Breems-Diekevers, Director of Students Development, Secondary Programs and Transitions Allie Unrau, Coordinator of the Learning Intermediary Network
Local Business and Industry Representatives	Partners are invited from many different employers including: Rosenboom, Maintainer, Rome, Sanford, Sheldon Community School District, Citizens State Bank, ISU Extension, Holly & Co, People's Bank, among others
Local Workforce Development	Curt Strouth, Community Development Director for Sheldon Kiana Johnson, Executive Director O'Brien County Economic Development

Costs and Funding Sources

The Sheldon School District supports the work based learning activities through the general fund. Grants are applied for and used as appropriate streams are identified and can be supported. The district is intentional about taking advantage of STEM BEST grants as often as possible. The school does not depend on funding from other community sources.

Additional Regional and Community Assets

There are additional organizations that support our work to develop quality work based learning experiences.

→ Advisory Boards

- ◆ CTE teachers hold advisory board meetings twice a year to gather input from professionals, parents, and students in their respective areas. CAPS also has an advisory board that meets as needed.
- ◆ District Leadership Team (DLT) is a team that consists of administrators, teachers, parents, and students from each attendance center in the district. The DLT meets several times a year to share information with the team and to gather information.

→ Northwest AEA

- ◆ NWAEA has several consultants that advise on and support work around work based learning in our district. They also provide resources for us to use, facilitate collaboration between districts, provide training, and advocate for our district in other arenas.

→ Northwest Iowa Community College

- ◆ NCC is a willing partner with the Sheldon school district when it comes to supporting and growing work based learning opportunities. They are open to providing space for students to learn, speakers to share knowledge, credit for post-secondary courses, access to credential programming, and cooperation on new endeavors.

→ Iowa STEM

- ◆ Iowa STEM has been instrumental in providing resources, funding, and support as we grow our work based learning programming. The Sheldon Community School District has taken advantage of STEM Scale Up programs and STEM Best awards. Regional and state employees keep sending opportunities to us to build our resources and options.

→ Sheldon Chamber and Development (SCDC)

- ◆ The SCDC's goal is to promote Sheldon to businesses and families. They partner with the school by supporting our programs, communicating opportunities to their stakeholders, and keeping us informed of community trends.

→ O'Brien County Economic Development

- ◆ The O'Brien County EDC is a private, nonprofit organization incorporated for the purpose of promoting economic development in O'Brien County that emphasizes ag-related businesses, manufacturing/ industrial, and renewable fuels.

ICAP utilization

Our students prepare a 4-year plan in 8th grade. The plan is reviewed every year by the student and their family. As part of the plan's yearly review, the student and family are advised on opportunities on coursework including concurrent enrollment options and work based learning that support the student's postsecondary goals. Each student's teacher advisor supports them through the planning and scheduling process. Prior to graduation, the student is advised how to successfully complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) and scholarships by our school counselor.

Perkins alignment

The Sheldon Community School District does not use Perkins funds toward work-based learning, but utilizes this funding to keep current with industry specific equipment as much as possible.

Challenges and Barriers

Coming full circle from articulating a vision for intentional, cohesive, work based learning experiences to reflecting on the implementation of such a program allows us to recognize the challenges and barriers ahead of us. The following challenges are ones we must consider as a district.

The Systematic Implementation of the Vision and the Program

In order for our work based learning programming to be successful, there needs to be a person in charge of the work and moving it forward. Without this person, there is no one to coordinate all the players in the process. Someone needs to have sufficient time to call the meetings, keep records updated, stay up to date on new research and opportunities, and be a single point of contact for potential partners and teachers who wish to implement. In order for this to be a K-12 plan, the person must work beyond a single building and build a team so that the program can survive any transitions that may happen in the future.

Competition for Time

Time is one of the most valuable assets a school district has. The way we spend our time needs to address all aspects of education. In the busy world of curriculum, instruction, assessment, MTSS, social-emotional learning, and more, adding work based learning to the list of priorities is challenging. In addition to competing for teacher time, this program also competes for student time. In order to take full advantage of work based learning opportunities, especially at the higher levels, students need to commit time from their day for those experiences. A student's day is full of academics, extracurriculars, and personal interests. Most often college classes, clubs, sports, fine arts, and work schedules fill their free time. Adding in work based learning might mean forgoing other interests.

The Collection and Distribution of Information

Since most of the efforts around work based learning depends on conversations, adapting to individual needs, and timely responses, the collection and distribution of information is definitely a challenge in this work. Not connecting with the right person can stall or even end a great opportunity. The information comes in from all directions and needs to go out in all directions. Determining a reliable point of communication that can easily be accessed by all parties, updated efficiently, and simply navigated is an important task that will be essential to the successful development of this work.