

# Work-Based Learning Definition and Reporting

## Work-Based Learning

The passage of [Senate File 2411](#) in May 2024 clarified a consistent definition of **work-based learning**:

**“sustained project-based learning in partnership with an employer, simulated work experiences aligned with industry-recognized credentials, high-quality pre-apprenticeships aligned to an apprenticeship, student learner programs, internships, and apprenticeships.”**

- These experiences primarily occur in high school, and student attainment of work-based learning experiences is a priority indicator in Iowa’s school rating calculations under the new, unified accountability system.
- Work-based learning experiences primarily take place in a physical work environment, but some may be provided in a simulated or virtual work environment within a classroom setting.

## Career Exploration

**Career exploration** includes activities such as career fairs, business tours, job shadows and employability skills courses. These activities are designed to assist with exploring and building awareness of the available careers in in-demand, high-wage and public good college and career pathways.

- Career exploration activities primarily occur in middle school and early high school.
- While most of these activities will take place within a classroom setting, some may take place at off-site locations or work sites.

## Career-Connected Learning

**Career-connected learning** is an umbrella term that incorporates both career exploration and work-based learning.

- While career exploration activities empower students in learning about work, work-based learning supports students working to learn the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in the workplace and what comes next.

*All applicable [guides, websites and other resources](#) are being updated to reflect this and related.*

## Reporting

Beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, work-based learning reporting will reflect the new definition.

- This reporting definition will be reflected in Iowa’s new, unified Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) school accountability system, which includes work-based learning experiences attained in the Postsecondary Readiness Indicator.
- This reporting definition will be reflected in Iowa’s Perkins Secondary Career and Technical Education 5S3 work-based learning measure and Iowa Student Outcomes work-based learning interactive dashboard.

Schools will leverage existing SCED codes and new embedded work-based learning codes to report these activities to the Iowa Department of Education.

Refer to the [Student Reporting in Iowa \(SRI\) Data Dictionary](#) for additional information.