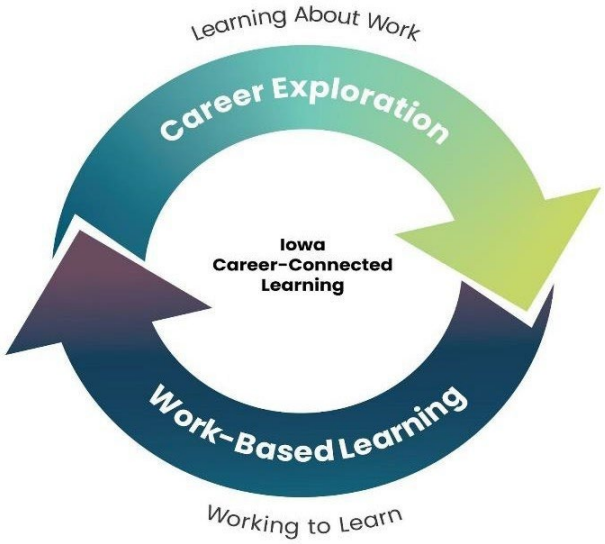
Authentic Project Experiences Toolkit

Authentic project definition:
Authentic projects are a **career exploration** experience that engages industry partners through meaningful projects completed by students. Authentic projects require industry partner interaction throughout the duration of the project. Authentic projects involve tools, tasks or processes from an actual work setting and involve the students working to address a real-world and relevant problem or topic. To maximize student career learning and engagement, educators should connect the student with more information on careers related to the project and how the project is connected to everyday responsibilities in the career field. Industry partners should provide constructive feedback for students to continue to develop their professional skills to ensure future success.



Preparation for Authentic Project Experiences

Take advantage of training to provide successful classroom support

- Agile Scrum Training available through the Authentic Learning Network
- Review the Developing Professional Skills in CTE Toolkit for strategies to prepare students with professional skills prior to completing authentic projects. Whether or not your course is a CTE course, the information provided in the toolkit is applicable to producing a successful authentic project outcome.

Identify a project to meet student learning objectives

- From local industry partners
  - Use the industry partners in your community to develop an authentic project to address a challenge they are currently facing
  - Consider identifying potential project ideas and asking industry to participate or meeting with local industry and requesting projects
    - » Keep a list of potential projects either by recording video pitches of project ideas or providing a simple online form for industry to complete
- Clearinghouse for Work-Based Learning
  - The Clearinghouse for Work-Based Learning provides an inventory of authentic projects to make classroom implementation easier. The list of projects can be sorted by academic domain among other filters.

Identify how communication with industry partners will take place

- If the communication will take place in-person at your school building, consider the policies for visitors and where the meetings will take place
- If the experience is taking place at an industry partner site, review and adhere to district policies when leaving the building

Facilitate learning and successful outcomes

- Communicate deadlines and delivery models with the industry partner to ensure both parties are aware of expectations
- Identify prior learning and skills students will need to be successful with the project
    - Communication skills - will the students be writing emails, presenting to clients and/or making phone calls?
    - Listening skills - what are the expectations from students when meeting with the industry partner and researching for the project?
    - Technology skills - what software/online programs will students need to be competent on in order to deliver the intended outcome?
    - Collaboration skills - how will student teams be established and supported?
    - Identify other technical or professional skills necessary for project success.
- Assessment
    - How will students be assessed for the project results and how do those outcomes tie into the standards for the course?
- Communication support from the educator/instructor
    - What communication will occur between the educator/instructor and the industry partner?
    - What measures are in place to communicate potential issues?

Include career learning and connections

- Make the intentional connection between the authentic project and the career it is connected to.
    - What can students learn about the careers associated with the authentic project prior to the start of the project?
- Provide age-appropriate career learning
  Examples include:
    - Reading a book about the career (ideal for elementary students)
    - Watching a short video clip on the career
    - Assigning a career and/or organization research assignment
    - Locate an industry specific magazine
    - Sharing the industry partner's biography with the students

Prepare the industry professional for a positive experience

- Provide expectations for the experience (how many interactions/meetings)
  Logistics
    - If the meetings with industry will be in your classroom:
        - Share parking information
        - Share information on the entry and security process to enter the building
            - If applicable, identify a staff member who will meet the professional in the front office
        - Confirm the days and times for the meetings
        - Relay expectations for the student's professional behavior and attire
    - If the meeting will be at an industry site:
        - Identify and coordinate transportation logistics including parking
        - Identify and coordinate support staff based on student participation and needs
        - Follow district policy protocol for offsite events/experiences
        - Confirm the day and time for the meetings
        - Relay expectations for the student's professional behavior and attire
    - Communication
        - Finalize and confirm details of the meetings with the industry partner and site location
            - Initial planning and final confirmation closer to the meeting/presentation dates

During the Authentic Project Experience

Provide a simple checklist for the day of the event

- Academic expectations of the professional
  - Actively engage with student participants and assist with the technical simulation issues
  - Provide necessary information and a point of contact for students to reach out to with additional questions during the project
  - Bridge the experience to careers in the field
  - Be prepared to be responsive and provide appropriate feedback throughout the experience
- Expectations of the student
  - Arrive prepared to participate and ask questions for all meetings
  - Actively participate to support a successful outcome of the project
  - Use professionalism in behavior, communication and attire during the experience
- Expectations of the educator/instructor
  - Ensure the logistics of the event are communicated and adhered to
  - Be mindful of supporting timelines and student growth during the project
    - Additional mini lessons may be necessary to provide ongoing support for a successful outcome
  - Be present and willing to support the professional to ensure students are respectful and are actively participating

After the Authentic Project Experience

Make note of the experience and collect feedback

- Collect feedback from the professional, students and your own observations
- Identify recommendations to improve future experiences

Send a thank you note to the professional(s)

- Encourage students to write a thank you note or email as well
  - This connects the value of the professional's time and provides an opportunity for students to practice professional skills

Connect the authentic project experience with student ICAP

Note for college instructors: Although the acronym ICAP is used in K-12, the following examples provide valuable reflection activities in supporting work-based learning for college students.

Sample reflection activities:

- Top Five
  - What are the top five things the student learned from the work-based learning experience?
- Survey
  - Create a short survey and provide a QR code for students to complete their response
- More examples are available on the Department's Career and Academic Planning webpage

Consider extension activities to deepen connections of content to career

- Research activities to learn more about the career or organization
- Present the final project to another appropriate audience with the permission of the industry partner
- Coordinate additional work-based learning experiences with the industry partner, such as:
  - Worksite Exploratory Event
  - Job Shadow
  - Internship

Photos/video from the event

- If you have pictures from the authentic project experience, share the pictures with the professional and your district
    - Make sure you have photo releases prior to sharing
- Publicizing the project demonstrates the value of the experience and the partnership with local industry

Provide an extension to the experience

- Ask the professional to be a part of another classroom project or presentation
- Connect with the professional to develop a career-based service learning project

Additional Preparation and Reflection Example Activities

Example Student Preparation Activities

Research activity in preparation for the authentic project experience (possible questions)

1. Professional's organization name and website:
2. Professional names and titles collaborating on the project:
3. Organization's location:
4. Organization's mission statement:
5. What is the organization's primary product or service?
6. What departments exist within the organization?
7. Who are at least two competitors for the organization the professional is employed with?
8. What are three questions you have about the organization, career path and/or professional that you would like to ask?

Career Research Activity

1. Name of career
2. Education/training required for this career path
3. Typical tasks/responsibilities in this career path
4. Skills required for success in this career
5. Related careers that interest you
6. Typical earnings in this career path
7. Projected job openings in Iowa for this career

Example Student Reflection

Authentic project experience reflection activity (possible questions)

1. Student name
2. Professional's organization name:
3. What did you enjoy about the project you completed?
4. What do you wish would have been different about the project you completed?
5. What did you like about the career you experienced?
6. Would you consider a career in this field? Why or why not?
7. What did you learn that interested you about this career? What did you learn that did not interest you?
8. What knowledge or skills would you need to strengthen in order to be successful in a career like the one you experienced? Please explain.
9. Identify your next steps based on your experience. What courses are you interested in taking next? Are there related careers you would be interested in learning more about?