



# Providing Equitable Student Access and Support for Work-Based Learning

## Purpose

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The purpose of this resource is to support increased student access to quality work-based learning experiences for all students, including students with disabilities and students who have been underserved.

## Positive Impact of Work-Based Learning for Students

- Builds positive relationships with adult educators/instructors and industry professionals to develop important skills, behavior and resiliency.
- Connects students to valuable information, experiences, encouragement and a network of professionals.
- Affords the opportunity to explore through hands-on learning in a new environment to develop career and professional skills through feedback and mentorship.

## Advocating for Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences

1. Take the [Work-Based Learning Self-Assessment](#) to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities for improved internal practices.
2. Use your team to build a sequence of work-based learning experiences throughout a student's academic career.
  - a. At the school district level, use your [district career and academic planning team](#)
  - b. At the college level, use your work-based learning planning team

## Helping Students Overcome Work-Based Learning Access Barriers

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### Academic Barriers:

Students may struggle with academic courses, be credit deficient, have high rates of absenteeism or high rates of mobility which restricts access to work-based learning experiences. With concerns over students completing coursework to graduate on time, students may miss out on work-based learning experiences their peers have access to.

### Strategies to Increase Equitable Access:

- [Embed](#) work-based learning experiences into coursework to ensure student support and access.
- Intentionally connect students to additional experiences and resources to support the student's individual career and academic plan (ICAP).

### Financial Barriers:

Students may have limited access to financial support or are under circumstances where they need to provide money for individual or family needs. With the immediate concern for the student earning money or having the funds for other needs, some students are not provided access to professional experiences in careers of interest.

### Strategies to Increase Equitable Access:

- Develop internal procedures to connect students to common financial barriers with professional clothing and transportation to work-based learning experiences.
- Advocate for participation in professionally paid internships or apprenticeships that will allow the student to continue to earn money as well as connect to a career of interest.

### Behavioral Barriers:

Students who may appear unmotivated in the classroom, have behavioral records at the district/college, or adjudicated youth may have limited access to work-based learning experiences. With the concern for how students might behave around industry professionals or at off-site experiences, sometimes these students may have limited access to work-based learning.

### Strategies to Increase Equitable Access:

- Provide support during embedded work-based learning experiences.
- Introduce students to career learning and work-based learning experiences based on the individual student needs.
- As students demonstrate professional behavior, provide more work-based learning experiences across the continuum.

### Experiences Leading toward Independent Work-Based Learning:

- Support participation with embedded work-based learning experiences provided on campus
  - Examples: classroom speakers, career immersion experiences and authentic projects
- Encourage off campus experiences with the accompaniment of the educator and classmates
  - Examples: worksite exploratory events, interactive career events and career-based service learning
- Connect the student to individual short-term experiences with industry professionals
  - Examples: informational interview, job shadow or mock interviews
- Prepare students for professional experiences
  - Examples: professional skills workshops and school-based enterprises
- Assist and mentor the transition to off campus experiences
  - Examples: internships and apprenticeships

## Additional Support Strategies

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### Providing Workplace Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

- Provide support based on the individual need of the student as outlined in an IEP, 504 Plan or other identified support document.
  - Support may include instruction prior to the experience, directly on site throughout the experience or after the experience.
    - Examples: job coaching, assistive technology, direct communication with the business, etc.
  - Involve [AEA](#) consultants for determining student support needs and assistive technology that may be needed.
- Development of business relationships to match student interest and abilities with work-based learning experiences.
- Training plan goals for experiences should appropriately challenge the student to develop career skills connected to the student's interest areas.
- Connect to community support services, such as [Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services](#) or [Iowa Department for the Blind](#), for assistance with determining appropriate workplace accommodations and support needs.

## Additional Support for Successful English Learner Participation:

- Provide interpreters or translated materials to share with students and/or families about opportunities for work-based learning.
- Make connections with teachers who support students learning English to provide awareness of programs/opportunities that are available for students.
- If applicable, share cultural norms for places of employment in the United States (punctuality, eye contact, greetings, etc).
- Seek out businesses with a diverse workforce and/or serves a majority population of immigrants to establish a relationship for work-based learning experiences

## Additional Considerations for Successful Participation for Adjudicated Youth

Adjudicated youth are students who are not currently incarcerated but are involved in the criminal justice system. Many adjudicated youths would benefit tremendously from an opportunity to be successful and participate in experiences connected with their future career plans. Students who have been associated with the juvenile justice system should not be permanently prevented from participating in work-based learning activities.

- Adjudicated students may be supervised by a Juvenile Court Officer (JCO), who may need to approve or be informed about the student's participation in work-based learning experiences.
- Some students may need to obtain permission from their JCO to participate in a job or internship, or may need to obtain time sheets from their work location to demonstrate their location during a given time slot.
- If parents or staff have concerns that a student may be a risk to other students or the community at large, focus on building skills that will eventually allow independent work-based learning.

## Resources

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- [Iowa Work-Based Learning Guide](#)
- [Embedding Work-Based Learning Worksheet](#)
- [Work-Based Learning Self-Assessment Tool](#)
- [Iowa Work-Based Learning Website](#)