LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Building High Quality Work-Based Learning Programs

A Guide for School Systems and CTE Leaders to Elevate Work-Based Learning Opportunities

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Table of Contents

Introduction

[Work-based learning](#) (WBL) offers Career and Technical Education (CTE) students on-the-job training and classroom instruction, helping them develop job skills, explore career interests, and gain real-world experience. WBL experiences now include cooperative education, paid internships, and structured on-the-job training through Registered Apprenticeships recognized by the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC).

WBL is essential to both a rigorous education and a high quality CTE program. When well-designed, CTE programs can help students gain the technical skills needed for success in the workplace fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills essential for career growth.

This document provides school systems with detailed steps to create, strengthen, and expand WBL programs. Each section is designed to equip system leaders with the insights and tools necessary to create, sharpen, and expand work-based learning opportunities in the communities they serve.

Step 1.   Foundation and Planning

1.1.   Initial Planning and Organization

☐ **Identify key stakeholders**
- ☐ Form a Work-Based Learning Leadership Team with a broad range of perspectives, including:
  - ○ WBL teachers, principals, counselors,
  - ○ district-level communications leader,
  - ○ large *and* small business/industry partners,
  - ○ community leaders (Chambers of Commerce, PTA, local government officials),
  - ○ post-secondary partners,
  - ○ workforce development partners,
  - ○ industry-specific partners.

☐ **Create a framework for Business Outreach**
- ☐ Assess the needs of the local economy and economic drivers to identify the types of work-based learning that are most relevant.
- ☐ Evaluate current resources such as local businesses, mentors, skilled workforce, and physical infrastructure.
- ☐ Develop criteria for identifying and selecting businesses for outreach, promotion, CTE programs, and WBL programs.
- ☐ Create a student-focused goal/vision for WBL in the community.
- ☐ Identify a single member of the WBL Leadership Team to serve as the point of outreach and contact for business and industry.

☐ **Employment Certificate Process**
- ☐ Identify the current, local [Employment Certificate Issuer](s) and hours of operation so the system can support students in obtaining the CTE Employment Certificate necessary for an internship or work-based learning experience.
- ☐ Designate multiple Employment Certificate Issuers within the district's employment to eliminate challenges such as location, hours of availability, and days of availability.

1.2.   Employer Engagement and Partnership Development

☐ **Engage Regional Economic Development Organizations (REDOs) and local Chambers of Commerce**
- ☐ Identify industries with a demand for workers and potential employers that might be willing to hire students.
- ☐ Utilize the organization to help bring small business owners into the planning, outreach, and implementation process. This can help schools tap into existing networks for recruitment and support.

☐ **Recruit Employers**
- ☐ Research small businesses, family-owned enterprises, non-profits, agricultural sectors, local government agencies, and healthcare providers in the area.
  - ○ Create a list of potential employers.
- ☐ Offer information sessions to explain work-based learning for both businesses and students.
- ☐ Host industry-specific roundtables to bring together to discuss strategies for enhancing work-based learning opportunities, align training programs with industry needs, and foster partnerships that help bridge the skills gap and prepare the next generation of talent.

- [ ] Send personalized invitations to community employers for site visits of system CTE programs.
  - Provide businesses with a directory of student skills and interests for potential job-matching.
  - Invite businesses to speak directly to students about work opportunities.
- [ ] Arrange for local businesses to host tours and job shadowing days to introduce themselves and their industry to students.

1.3. Student Recruitment

- [ ] **Integrate WBL in Student Planning**
  - [ ] Build work-based learning opportunities into materials for the Individual Graduation Planning process.
  - [ ] Highlight opportunities for postsecondary education with local post-secondary institutions and third party providers by integrating the SCA catalog into the scheduling process.
  - [ ] Employers can conduct interviews for available internship experiences or use the initial career day as an opportunity to engage with students with the intent of offering an internship interview.
- [ ] **Identify and Align Employers to Career Pathways**
  - [ ] Identify local employers and align them to pathways offered.
  - [ ] Using the Application to Employ Minors documents already completed by the system, identify businesses who currently or previously employ(ed) minors/students.
  - [ ] Use this information to also identify students who may already be employed so Cooperative Education opportunities can be leveraged.
- [ ] **Conduct Student Interest Surveys**
  - [ ] Create and distribute interest surveys to middle and high school students, coordinating this effort with the system plan for middle school career options activities to ensure alignment and effective support for student engagement and career exploration.
  - [ ] Utilize Louisiana Workforce Commission's Career Explorer and My Life, May Way, to help students match skills, employment interests, and work values.
- [ ] **Host Career Days and Networking Events**
  - [ ] Organize a career day where students can engage with potential employers and learn about internships and job opportunities.
  - [ ] Create virtual career events for students and families to learn about WBL opportunities and be able to ask questions and/or engage with potential employers.
- [ ] **Build Engagement Throughout the Year**
  - [ ] Former students can serve as guest speakers either representing a business or speaking to their own previous internship experiences.
  - [ ] Provide businesses with ongoing opportunities to engage with individual schools throughout the year.
  - [ ] Coordinate with industry Talent Coordinators and Recruiters to determine the highly valued skills required for entry-level positions.

1.4. Parent or Guardian Engagement

- [ ] **Involve parents in Recruitment and Support**
  - [ ] Use open-house as an opportunity for parents and students to learn about WBL opportunities and to invite parents with businesses or with industry connections to learn more about hosting an intern.

- ☐ Create a "Parent Business Connection" that has a method for parents who have business connections to request more information in hosting an intern.
- ☐ Create monthly newsletters showcasing student experiences, successes, and opportunities.

1.5. Promote CTE and WBL experiences to all stakeholders

☐ **Develop Promotional Materials**
- ☐ Utilize the Work-based Learning Leadership Team to identify local stakeholders to target in promotion.
- ☐ Create digital and physicals pamphlet/media for stakeholders, including:
  - ○ CTE opportunities and work-based learning opportunities currently available,
  - ○ credentialing progressions and what a student's high school experience could look like when braiding in credentials, internships, Registered Apprenticeships, and/or Certificates of Technical Studies, and
  - ○ method for interested industry parties to request information for future involvement.
- ☐ Ensure broad access so all stakeholders can access this regardless of geographic location, and post informational flyers with a QR code linked to the kit in local hubs such as grocery stores, libraries, event centers, etc.

☐ **Promote Benefits to Businesses**
- ☐ Create a pamphlet for potential WBL partners that highlights the benefits, expectations, and support businesses will receive.
- ☐ Include example progressions of credentialing beneficial to employers and how work-based learning is essential to capitalize on the full benefits.
- ☐ Highlight the types of support the business will get from the system throughout the work-based learning process.

☐ **Present information to community stakeholders**
- ☐ Present WBL to various community groups (e.g., government, parent-teacher organizations, business associations).
- ☐ Ensure all school personnel, including core teachers, understand WBL and its importance.

1.6. Data Collection and Program Evaluation

☐ **Track and Report WBL Programs**
- ☐ Develop a system to track available internships and internship requirements.
- ☐ Develop a process to report end of year data that includes:
  - ○ The number of students and employers participating;
  - ○ The total number of internship hours;
  - ○ Employment location, start/end times, semester dates; and
  - ○ Participation rates across sub-populations (e.g., gender, pathway participation).
- ☐ Utilize this report in conjunction with other assessment mechanisms to analyze program capacity and growth.

☐ **Use Data for Capacity Planning**
- ☐ Assess internship capacity based on available employer partnerships and student interest.
- ☐ Use data to make creative scheduling decisions, such as splitting internship positions among multiple students.

- ☐ **Analyze Program Growth**
  - ☐ Utilize the Work-Based Learning Leadership Team to analyze data and determine the short and long term need.
  - ☐ Conduct a root cause analysis on challenges to employment.
- **1.7. Middle School Engagement**
  - ☐ Invite middle schoolers to the high school campus(es) to view available career pathways and WBL opportunities offered.

Step 2. Program Design and Structure

2.1. Curriculum Identification or Development for WBL classroom experience

- ☐ **Core Curriculum Elements**
  - ☐ Career Navigation
    - ○ Help students identify career interests and align them with their personal and technical strengths, particularly with high wage, high need career opportunities in their local communities.
    - ○ This can be achieved through career assessments, mentorship programs, and exposure to local industry leaders.
  - ☐ Financial Literacy
    - ○ Teach students to read and understand pay stubs, taxes, and deductions.
    - ○ Provide a comprehensive understanding of managing personal finances, budgeting, and making informed financial decisions as they transition from school to the workforce.
  - ☐ Workplace Behavioral Competencies focused on key workplace skills, including:
    - ○ Communication: Develop students' verbal and written communication skills, emphasizing professional etiquette, clarity, and conciseness in workplace settings.
    - ○ Teamwork: Encourage collaboration and understanding of work styles and group dynamics by creating projects that require collaboration.
    - ○ Leadership: Cultivate leadership potential through activities that promote initiative, responsibility, and decision-making.
    - ○ Problem-Solving: Equip students with strategies for addressing and resolving issues in the workplace, fostering a solutions-oriented mindset.
- ☐ **Tailored Experiences and Reflective Practices**
  - ☐ Align classroom learning with real-world career opportunities. Based on career assessments and local labor market needs, design students' experiences to capitalize on specific job opportunities that exist within their communities, particularly in high-demand industries.
  - ☐ Work with employers to ensure the curriculum aligns with real-world industry needs.
  - ☐ Introduce reflective practices that encourage students to regularly assess their strengths and areas for growth throughout their WBL experiences.
  - ☐ Provide journals or self-assessment tools to guide students in identifying what they've learned, the challenges they've encountered, and how they can improve.
- ☐ **Workplace Readiness Skills**
  - ☐ Teach students strategies for managing their time effectively and prioritizing tasks in the workplace. Introduce time management techniques such as task breakdown, deadline setting, and using organizational tools (e.g., calendars, to-do lists).

- ☐ **Engagement with Workplace Stakeholders**
    - ☐ Develop strategies for engaging with coworkers, managers, and administrative staff, teaching students professional etiquette and how to build positive working relationships with diverse team members.
- ☐ **Application, Interview, and Onboarding Cycle**
    - ☐ Refine the application, interview, and onboarding process by teaching students how to:
        - ○ Write effective resumes and cover letters.
        - ○ Prepare for interviews by practicing common questions and role-playing scenarios.
        - ○ Understand the onboarding process, including what to expect when starting a new job and how to complete necessary documentation (e.g., tax forms, job expectations).
- ☐ **Alignment with Local Career Pathways and Industry Needs**
    - ☐ Ensure that the curriculum is aligned with local industry needs, particularly high-wage and high-need career opportunities within the community.
    - ☐ Collaborate with industry partners to ensure the curriculum reflects the non-technical competencies employers are looking for, making sure students gain skills that are directly applicable to local employment opportunities.
- ☐ **Continuous Improvement and Program Evaluation**
    - ☐ Implement a feedback loop where students, teachers, and employers provide input on the curriculum's effectiveness.
    - ☐ Use this data to continuously improve the curriculum, ensuring it remains relevant to both student needs and the changing demands of the workforce.

2.2. Teacher Identification and Master Schedule Review

- ☐ **Identifying Key Teacher(s) for WBL Integration**
    - ☐ Select teachers with expertise and passion for CTE to be assigned as the WBL Instructor.
    - ☐ Once teacher(s) have been identified, review their teacher certification to determine if the system must apply for a CTTIE certification.
    - ☐ Provide teacher(s) with professional development related to the WBL experiences, such as industry trends and effective mentoring strategies.
    - ☐ Provide training regarding child labor laws specific to WBL opportunities that may be specialized in nature.
    - ☐ If the system is developing a curriculum, provide the teacher(s) with support in the curriculum development process.
    - ☐ Provider teacher(s) with the opportunity to engage with WBL employers including visiting the worksite.
- ☐ **Analyze Current Master Schedule**
    - ☐ Review the master school schedule to determine the appropriate placement for the WBL classroom experience.
        - ○ If the system will implement the classroom experience in a virtual setting, ensure that the LMS platform has the appropriate capabilities.
    - ☐ Review the Pupil Progression Plan to include flexibility for students accessing WBL experiences. This could include ensuring WBL students have access to early release and/or access to the virtual course.

☐ Vary internship timelines and opportunities - WBL can occur throughout the year, regardless of when schools are in session.

2.3. Develop a Framework for the Memorandum of Understanding between the School System and Employer

☐ **Legal Consultation**
- ☐ School systems should consult with their internal legal team during the MOU development process.

☐ **Cooperative Development**
- ☐ Identify the specific skills and knowledge to be taught in the classroom environment.
- ☐ Identify the specific skills and competencies to be developed during the on-the-job training experience to be completed by the employer partner.

☐ **Risk Management**
- ☐ The school system and employer should identify potential hazards and risks associated with the on-the-job training environment.
- ☐ The school system and employer should identify mitigation strategies to reduce risks to students during both the classroom and OJT phases.
- ☐ Identify emergency procedures and protocols for addressing incidents during the training process.

☐ **Liability and Insurance**
- ☐ The MOU should include specifications regarding student coverage for workers' compensation and liability insurance.

☐ **Student Financial Compensation**
- ☐ The MOU should detail the specifications regarding student financial compensation including which entity makes the payment to the student and the terms of payment.

☐ **Term and Termination**
- ☐ The school system and employer should determine if the requirements for terminating the student employment should be included in the MOU.

☐ **General Provisions**
- ☐ The MOU should detail the process for amending the MOU.
- ☐ The school system and employer should determine the need to include student confidentiality in the MOU.
- ☐ Identify essential and preferred skills the employer requires for internship positions including foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

2.4. Transportation

☐ **Identify Challenges and Solutions**
- ☐ Systems should be familiar with the type of funding currently available to them that includes transportation as an allocable expense.
- ☐ Utilizing the Work-Based Learning Leadership Team and specialists in transportation such as the school system Director of Transportation, local private transportation services, or local government transit managers, identify areas in which transportation from the students home or school to the worksite requires special attention.
- ☐ Once problematic areas are identified, the Leadership team and transportation specialist should identify solutions for each area. These solutions can include:
  - ○ Collaboration with local transportation providers
  - ○ Ride-sharing programs or volunteer driver programs

- ○ Transportation vouchers for public transportation
- ○ Carpooling or shared transportation
- ○ School System owned vehicles such as buses or cars
- ○ Offering a flexible schedule to students to allow for travel time
- ☐ For students in rural areas of the community, school systems should seek employers located in rural areas of the community to become employer partners.

Step 3. Implementation

3.1. Matching Students to WBL
- ☐ WBL teacher(s) should review internship requirements and review student self assessment to determine potential placement.
- ☐ Organize a formal interview process to allow employers to directly assess the students' readiness for the employer.
- ☐ In conjunctions with the employer, develop offer letters for students.

3.2. Student Onboarding
- ☐ The employer and WBL teacher should cooperatively develop an onboarding package that includes a detailed orientation session, introductions to key team members, and a tour of the work environment.
- ☐ A worksite mentor or supervisor should be identified for each student.
- ☐ Provide orientation and training for students to prepare them for workplace expectations, including workplace etiquette, safety protocols, and professional behavior.
- ☐ Provide students with a guidebook that includes appropriate company policies, expectations and key procedures.

3.3. Communication and Oversight
- ☐ **Establishing communication**
  - ☐ Identify a point of contact for the school system and employer partner.
  - ☐ Schedule regular meetings with the worksite supervisor/mentor and WBL teacher to ensure that students are supported and engaged throughout the internship.
  - ☐ Provide participating employers with a primary point of contact at the system level for overarching logistics and needs.
- ☐ **On-going Communication**
  - ☐ Conduct monitoring site visits in a cadence that works with the system's grading periods, business availability, and teacher availability. Site visits should also avoid being "stacked" (i.e. three visits in one month).
  - ☐ Maintain regular contact with the employer (once a week) to continue support, dialogue, and formative check-ins.
  - ☐ Ensure that employers understand the educational objectives of the WBL program and the roles they can play in supporting students' development.

Step 4. Sustainability and Scaling

4.1. Provide multiple intervention and feedback opportunities
- ☐ Formative Assessments: Conduct periodic assessments of student performance during the WBL experience, using methods like supervisor evaluations and self-assessments.
- ☐ End-of-Program Evaluation: Provide a final assessment that evaluates the student's overall learning, growth, and performance. This can be part of the grading for the academic course linked to the WBL.

☐ Employer Feedback: Employers should provide feedback on the student's performance, skills, and development, which is a requirement of the WBL policy and is valuable for both the student's growth and program improvement.

4.2. Continuous Review

☐ Create points throughout the internships to review materials, training documents, and feedback, allowing for program adjustments to happen in real-time when needed:

☐ Ensure that work-based learning sites remain appropriate for internships

☐ Ensure that materials used by the WBL teacher in conjunction with the business remain relevant

☐ Ensure that both the student experience (and parent understanding) is high-value and that relevant student experiences are used to inform programmatic change

4.3. Communicate Successes

☐ Set clear metrics for success, such as the number of students placed in internships, job retention rates, and employer satisfaction.

☐ Promote success stories from local businesses that have benefited from WBL programs to encourage others to join.

☐ Showcase student successes through recognition ceremonies.

☐ Showcase employer partnerships within the CTE program: hang banners, create employer-sponsored pathways, invite employers to end-of-year CTE celebrations.

4.4. Build Capacity in Local Schools and Training Providers

☐ Upskill local teachers, career advisors, and mentors in WBL best practices. This will ensure that there is enough local expertise to guide students and employers through the process.

☐ Engage local industry experts to contribute to curriculum development and classroom instruction to ensure skills developed in classrooms aligns with economic demand.

☐ Develop pathways for students that integrate WBL with secondary, post-secondary, and adult education. This includes building programs for early college credit or dual enrollment that combine academics and work-based experience.

4.5. Measure Impact and Iterate

☐ Evaluate the outcomes of WBL programs to ensure they are meeting the needs of both students and employers.

☐ Track metrics such as employment rates, skill development, and student satisfaction to demonstrate the value of WBL to the community and to funders.

☐ Use the data gathered to adjust and scale WBL programs based on what works best for students and employers.

☐ Expand successful models and explore new opportunities for growth, such as creating industry-specific training hubs or cross-sector collaborations.

Appendix A: Industry-Specific Opportunities

☐ **Agriculture and Agribusiness**
- ☐ Farm Internships: Students can work on local farms, gaining hands-on experience in crop management, livestock care, and sustainable farming practices.
- ☐ Agricultural Equipment: Partner with local dealerships or repair shops for internships focused on maintaining and repairing agricultural machinery.
- ☐ Food Processing: Internships in local food processing plants can give students exposure to the business side of agriculture, including logistics, marketing, and product development.

☐ **Healthcare**
- ☐ Health Clinics: Internships at healthcare centers or clinics, including roles in administration, medical assisting, or health outreach.
- ☐ Nursing and EMT: Students can intern with local hospitals or emergency services, offering experience in patient care, emergency response, and public health.
- ☐ Telemedicine: With the rise of telehealth, students can gain experience in virtual healthcare delivery models, administrative work, or customer service.

☐ **Education**
- ☐ Teacher's Assistant: Internships in schools allow students to assist in classrooms, tutor peers, or work with special education programs.
- ☐ Youth Program Development: Partner with local community centers or after-school programs to provide opportunities for students to help design or lead educational activities.

☐ **Hospitality and Tourism**
- ☐ Local Tourism Boards: Internships with tourism organizations can give students the chance to work in event planning, marketing, and public relations for tourism development.
- ☐ Lodging and Hospitality: Intern at local hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, or resorts, assisting with operations, guest services, and marketing.
- ☐ Outdoor Recreation: Opportunities with local parks, campgrounds, or outdoor adventure companies, offering students exposure to hospitality, environmental conservation, and recreation planning.

☐ **Construction and Skilled Trades**
- ☐ Building and Trades: Internships with local contractors or construction firms, offering hands-on experience in carpentry, plumbing, electrical work, or masonry.
- ☐ Green Building: Opportunities in sustainable construction or energy efficiency, especially relevant in areas focused on environmental conservation.
- ☐ Equipment Operation: Internships focused on heavy machinery operation or maintenance for construction and other industrial sectors.

☐ **Technology and Remote Work**
- ☐ Tech Support or Development: Many areas now offer internship opportunities in tech-related fields such as software development, IT support, or digital marketing.
- ☐ AgTech: With the rise of agricultural technology, internships could involve developing or implementing tech solutions for farming, including data collection, drone usage, and automated machinery.

☐ **Environmental and Conservation Work**
- ☐ Wildlife Management: Internships with local government agencies or non-profits in areas like wildlife conservation, forest management, or environmental education.
- ☐ Water Resource Management: Work with local government or agencies that oversee water rights, irrigation systems, or environmental protection in communities.

- [ ] **Small Business and Entrepreneurship**
  - [ ] Local Business Internships: Interning at local businesses, ranging from retail stores to service industries, can provide students with a range of skills, from management to marketing and customer service.
  - [ ] Entrepreneurship Programs: Partner with local incubators or entrepreneurial centers to offer internships focused on starting or growing businesses in communities.
- [ ] **Local Government and Public Service**
  - [ ] Local Government: Students can intern with city or county governments, gaining experience in public administration, community outreach, and policy-making.
  - [ ] Law Enforcement or Fire Services: Internships with local law enforcement, sheriff's offices, or fire departments to learn about public safety, crime prevention, or emergency response.
- [ ] **Transportation and Logistics**
  - [ ] Transportation Management: Internships with local transportation or delivery companies, offering students exposure to logistics, route planning, or fleet management.
  - [ ] Infrastructure: Interns could work with local or state government agencies on infrastructure projects, such as road maintenance, construction, or planning.