

ALABAMA WORK-BASED LEARNING HANDBOOK



A photograph of four diverse young adults (two women and two men) standing in a warehouse or industrial setting. They are all smiling and have their arms crossed. The background shows blue metal shelving units and various industrial materials. A semi-transparent dark blue overlay covers the right side of the image, containing the title and definition text.

ALABAMA DEFINITION OF **WORK-BASED LEARNING**

Sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, first-hand engagement with the tasks required of a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.

What is WBL?

Under the leadership of Governor Ivey, multiple state agencies responsible for workforce development have adopted a uniform definition of work-based learning (WBL). This was an essential first step in the process of increasing the common understanding of work-based learning and expanding its use. This effort has been facilitated by a grant from the National Governors Association and participation in a three-year Work-Based Learning Policy Academy. Through the NGA Policy Academy, the Alabama team has had the opportunity to engage with and learn from many other states and gain information from their best practices. Alabama was identified as a mentor state in the Policy Academy because of our state's vision to scale high-quality work-based learning opportunities for youth and young adults.

This handbook is the next step in that process. The purpose of this handbook is to help WBL practitioners, participants, and employers share a common language about the types and most common characteristics of work-based learning models. The use of common terminology improves communication between all stakeholders, which is necessary to continue growing the utilization of WBL as a key workforce development strategy that meets the needs of employers and learners.

Future activities related to this work include conducting comprehensive inventories of the WBL activities being implemented across the state, hosting WBL convenings, and recognizing scalable WBL best practices. These efforts will increase awareness of WBL as a tool and help continue to grow opportunities for engagement.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Continuum

The continuum illustrates a non-linear path from career awareness to exploration to preparation, with a myriad of activity options. The various work-based learning activities do not fall into hard and fast, siloed buckets, and just like with any continuum, some of the activities straddle more than one category. Not all of the activities along the continuum fit the definition of work-based learning on their own, but they are all critical components that support the overarching goals.

career awareness

LEARNING ABOUT WORK



The purposes of awareness activities are expanding the possibilities that students consider as viable career options and preparing students for further exploration and preparation activities. These activities can begin in the earliest stages of education and are an essential way for students to increase their awareness of personal interests and talents. Awareness activities are foundational to eventual success in WBL, but do not meet the definition of WBL on their own.

ACTIVITIES MIGHT INCLUDE:

Job Shadowing

Career Expo/
Career Day

Industry Tours

career preparation

LEARNING THROUGH WORK

When students have identified a specific career of interest, they should have long-term and firsthand engagements working in the career fields of their interest. These experiences are designed primarily to give students extensive practice in applying fundamental practical and technical knowledge and skills in the career of their choice. Career preparation experiences take place over a longer period of time and involve more responsibilities.

ACTIVITIES MIGHT INCLUDE:

Clinical/Practicum
Field Experience

Internship
(tied to a field of study)

On-the-Job
Learning

Pre-Apprenticeship

Registered
Apprenticeship

IRAP

career exploration

LEARNING FOR WORK

As students begin to focus on careers of interest, they should be provided opportunities to get involved directly with people actively working in those careers. Career exploration experiences encourage students to develop personal career interests, a better understanding of various career pathways, and the workplace readiness skills needed to begin making informed decisions about secondary and postsecondary education and training.

ACTIVITIES MIGHT INCLUDE:

Employability
Skill Training

Simulated
Workplace

Internship

Externship

Cooperative
Education

A man and a woman, both wearing blue polo shirts, are looking upwards at the underside of a vehicle in a workshop. The man is pointing with his right index finger towards the vehicle's components. The background shows various mechanical parts and pipes of the vehicle's undercarriage.

TYPES OF **WBL**

Job Shadowing

- Very short term (usually one to a few days)
- On-site, workplace visits
- Used to expose students to the world of work and possibly to make them aware of jobs they didn't know existed
- Traditionally one-on-one or perhaps up to three guests visiting a person or company

Job shadowing is an effective tool for increasing awareness and exposure to careers. Individuals can use the information gained from a job shadowing experience to determine if a general career field is of interest to them.

Job shadowing provides students with more exposure to both careers and workplaces as they interact with and observe one or more employees. They can learn about the nature of the job and the work environment, as well as the required education and training. Students can participate in more than one job shadowing opportunity, allowing them to compare careers of interest.

Examples

Ride along with HVAC service tech

Construction site visit

Classroom observation day

Take your child to work day



Awareness



Exploration



Preparation

Career Expo/Career Fair

- Single day event where groups of employers from various clusters will present information about careers in their field
- Familiarizes students with the breadth of occupations and careers available
- Often organized by grade level to allow for age-appropriate activity planning
- Sometimes coupled with, but not to be confused with a "Job Fair," where companies interview and hire for open positions

Most effective implementations of career expos include preparation activities to guide learning, as well as follow-up discussions to answer questions that were generated and extend learning.

Each Regional Workforce Council hosts Career Expos for 8th Graders, (WOW-Worlds of Work, WOO-Worlds of Opportunity, Career Discovery, etc.)

Some other very good career fairs are hosted by the high school CTE programs for younger students, which gives the older students an opportunity to serve as ambassadors to the younger students and share with them why they might want to explore careers in this pathway.

Examples

Career Day/Week in Elementary School

WOW Varsity for 11th/12th graders

College Skills Chapters





Employability Skill Training

- Provides participants with the foundational skills that are common and essential across all industry sectors and allow for effective performance in any level job
- Some specific programs exist for this (i.e. Ready to Work), but these skill trainings may also be built into other types of training.

Employability skills are basic skills that are necessary for success in the labor market at all employment levels and in all sectors. These skills have many names— soft skills, workforce readiness skills, career readiness skills—but they all include the same set of core skills that employers want. Employability skills are an essential component of college and career readiness.

Alabama has an industry-developed, state-recognized employability skill program called Ready to Work. RTW is offered as pre-employment training through AIDT, many high schools, and community colleges. For more information, visit alabamareadytowork.org

Sometimes formal employability skill training is finite, but every successful WBL program has a strong focus on continued learning of employability skills. Many educators or workforce training professionals already teach essential employability skills in their academic or technical skill classes, not just in an independent stand-alone activity.

Most Common Examples Listed by Employers

Show up to work on time

Show up every day

Put cell phones away

Get along with others

Pass a drug test



Industry Tours

- Visits to local businesses
- Typically half-day or full-day
- Can be visits to several businesses in one industry
- Can be visits to several different industries

Industry tours broaden awareness about local career opportunities and increase knowledge about the many jobs available within a business or geographic area, beyond those jobs that might typically come to mind. They also can help dispel misperceptions about certain kinds of jobs that might have traditionally been thought of as “dirty”.

Industry tours with students typically occur with middle and high school students. They are also very effective with groups of educators, providing some of the most impactful professional development available.

Industry tours are often coordinated by local Economic Development Authorities, Regional Workforce Councils, and Chambers of Commerce.



Awareness



Exploration



Preparation

Simulated Workplace

- Classes are structured like companies
- Students apply for entry
- Major focus on employability skills and preparation for entering the workforce at the entry level
- Employer advisory committees help schools build realistic simulated environments

The Alabama Simulated Workplace model transforms CTE classrooms into a company setting that introduces students to business processes using distinct workplace components. By incorporating realistic workplace content like interviews, applications, employee manuals, and promotions for skill gains, simulated workplaces transform the classroom into an experience to prepare students with more than just content knowledge.

In any high-quality simulated workplace, there will be active employer advisory committees that help determine what the lab setup should be and how to make the simulation look like the real world. Initial and continuous employer input is essential so that programs are as much like the real work environment as possible.

Objectives of Alabama Simulated Workplace

- Place business and industry processes directly into CTE programs
- Incorporate foundational academic and career ready skill sets
- Provide students an understanding of all aspects of an industry or business and how their individual success leads to company success
- Provide each student with an understanding and knowledge of how workplace processes and behaviors are integral skills to successful employment





Externship

- Goal is to send a proficient employee outside the existing job (and even potentially outside the industry) to broaden awareness and gain content knowledge
- Usually done for a defined period with a plan for returning to the initial employer
- The employee may be paid by their primary employer or through outside sources for the time they spend at the externship placement.

The Alabama Workforce Council has recommended externship placements as a way for career coaches and counselors to expand their own knowledge of career fields available to their students. Individuals providing guidance to students on selecting career paths are better prepared with first-hand knowledge and in-depth experience when discussing options with students. Externships can be arranged by school systems, individual employers, or employer associations.



Internship

- May be paid or unpaid work experience
- Length of the placement is often pre-determined
- Familiarizes potential candidates with the specific industry and/or the specific employer who is hosting the intern
- Involves students working in professional settings under the supervision and monitoring of practicing professionals
- Completion of an internship organized by an educational institution may be associated with earning secondary or post-secondary course credit
- Typically one-time work or service experiences related to the student's major or career goal

Internships are widely used across industry sectors as a way to let participants get a taste of what it's like to work in a given industry or specific occupation. The depth of involvement of interns can vary greatly from one placement to another. Some interns are closely mentored while working with a person in a very specific occupation, while others are provided a broader opportunity to explore various roles within an organization. Internships arranged through academic institutions may be associated with academic credit while other internships are directly established by employers as a recruitment tool for new talent.

Examples

Teacher preparation programs often use student teaching internships as the capstone to degree programs. Teacher interns are provided opportunities to demonstrate the content knowledge they have gained in methods courses under the supervision and guidance of a mentor teacher.

When employers establish internship programs themselves, the program may have no connection with academic credit. Some companies use summer intern programs as evaluation periods prior to making job offers to new talent.



Awareness



Exploration



Preparation

Clinical/Practicum Field Experience

- Work experience that is typically unpaid
- Length of the placement is often pre-determined
- Most often used to describe placements in healthcare training programs
- Clinical or practicum course credit may be earned when organized and completed through a secondary or post-secondary educational institution

One of the most common uses of clinicals and practicum experiences is within the medical field. Clinical experience gives health science students an opportunity to integrate knowledge gained in the classroom with clinical practice. During clinicals, students are placed in a variety of healthcare settings and spend time observing patients at different stages of medical practice. This provides students with a better understanding of the scope of the healthcare profession. Health and medical science teachers supervise clinical experiences.

Some clinical and practicum field experiences are paid, while some are specifically prohibited from being paid placement. This determination is normally made by an accrediting body when there is a licensure requirement involved in the occupation.





Cooperative Education (CoOp)

- Paid employment at a work site
- Focus is on gaining work experience
- Sometimes transitions to a long-term employment situation
- Job is not necessarily tied to the specific field of training the student is participating in
- Often just called "work-based learning" or WBL by K-12 teachers and administrators
- Participation is associated with earning secondary or post-secondary course credit
- Training agreement between employer and educational institution

Cooperative Education represents a cooperative agreement between an employer and an educational institution. Students participating in CoOp gain employability skills and industry experience. Cooperative Education is one of the most widely used forms of work-based learning and has seen a major resurgence in popularity in recent years. This form of training is commonly used in both secondary and postsecondary programs.

Successful CoOp implementations are built on flexible scheduling models established between the employer and the school. These arrangements are mutually beneficial, allowing for the student to continue academic study while providing value to the employer. Students are able to earn money while employers are able to fill entry-level jobs.

A key distinction from some other types of WBL is that not every CoOp placement is tied to the field of study for the student.



On the Job Learning (OJL)

- Paid work experience
- Tasks learned on the job are directly linked to technical instruction the student is receiving
- Must be through structured, supervised work experience
- Often results in long-term employment with the company

The critical defining characteristic of on the job learning (OJL) is the connection between academic study and real-world learning experience. This connection sets OJL apart as a more specifically career focused activity than a more general CoOp placement. Participants in OJL are not only seeking work experience and employability skills, but they are also learning the technical skills necessary for the career they are pursuing.

The connection of OJL to training for a specific occupation is one of the factors considered that sometimes makes WIOA funding available to support employers with program implementation.

Examples

- A participant in a manufacturing program of study may have an OJL placement working in a manufacturing job. Not only are they learning employability skills and gaining work experience, they are also learning how to do the specific manufacturing work related to their academic program.
- A participant in a manufacturing program of study working at a flower shop in a CoOp placement is learning employability skills and gaining work experience. This would not be an OJL placement because the technical skills don't match the instruction.



Awareness



Exploration



Preparation

Pre-apprenticeship

- Training must be connected to a registered apprenticeship.
- Participants are completing on-the-job learning and/or related technical instruction which will be counted towards completion of a registered apprenticeship IF the pre-apprentice ever actually becomes an apprentice.
- May be certified by the AOA as an indicator of quality.
- Participants may be youth or adults.

Pre-apprenticeships are designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship and ultimately a career. Pre-apprenticeship programs offer participants structured training opportunities to prepare them for entry into a Registered Apprenticeship Program. They can provide a set of services that participants need to progress into an apprenticeship, such as work-readiness skills and wraparound supports for transportation and childcare.

The Alabama Office of Apprenticeship (AOA) has developed a certification process based on national models and best practices. The AOA certification designates quality pre-apprenticeship programs that incorporate all of the following elements:

- Documented partnership with at least one Registered Apprenticeship Program
- Alignment of approved training and curriculum with industry standards and the Registered Apprenticeship Program
- Opportunity to earn an industry-recognized credential
- Hands-on learning with a career focus
- Access to support services and career counseling

Learn more and apply for certification at www.alapprentice.org





Registered Apprenticeship

Five components of all Registered Apprenticeships:

- Business driven
- On the job learning (OJL)
- Related technical instruction (RTI)
- Rewards for skills gains
- Nationally recognized credential

Registered Apprenticeship is a business-driven model that provides an effective way for employers to recruit, train, and retain highly skilled workers. Registered Apprenticeship is a proven model of job preparation that combines paid on-the-job learning with related instruction to progressively increase workers' skill levels and wages. In addition, apprenticeships allow employers to develop and apply industry standards to high-quality, structured training programs, therefore increasing productivity and the quality of the workforce.

Apprenticeships are esteemed opportunities. Apprenticeships afford participants a chance to earn money while they learn in a non-traditional classroom setting. The earn-and-learn model provides apprentices an opportunity to see a direct relation between their increasing skills and increasing wages. Apprenticeship programs are one of the most effective ways to reach our labor force participation and attainment goals and to ensure that Alabamians are on career pathways leading to economic mobility and self sufficiency.

Benefits of registering an apprenticeship program

- Very high retention rate
- Technical assistance
- Eligibility for a variety of funding supports

Registered apprenticeships are unlike regular training models developed by education and delivered to employers. Instead, they are developed by employers and supported by education providers.



Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs

Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs are high-quality apprenticeship programs recognized as such by a Standards Recognition Entity (SRE) pursuant to the USDOL's standards. These programs provide individuals with opportunities to obtain workplace-relevant knowledge and progressively advancing skills. IRAPs include a paid-work component and an educational component and result in an industry-recognized credential. An IRAP is developed or delivered by entities such as trade and industry groups, corporations, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, unions, and joint labor-management organizations.

Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs (IRAPs) are a brand-new form of apprenticeship intended to offer training in pathways not traditionally utilizing the registered apprenticeship model. The AOA has been recognized by the USDOL as an SRE. The AOA staff will help develop, maintain, and oversee IRAPs in manufacturing, drawing upon industry experience and knowledge to set industry-specific standards, monitor IRAP sponsor adherence to such standards, and collect and report IRAP program and performance information.

Through AOA's commitment to serving in this critical SRE role, they will help ensure that IRAPs provide valuable, safe, fair, and well-paying employment training opportunities that equip participants with the job skills needed by employers in the manufacturing industry.

As an SRE recognized by the United States Department of Labor, the AOA will lead the nation as an innovator in the development and implementation of these types of programs. Industry-recognized apprenticeship programs approved by the AOA will be known as AIRAPs (Alabama Industry-Recognized Apprenticeship Programs). These AIRAPs will enjoy the same tax benefits and many of the other financial supports available to other types of apprenticeships.

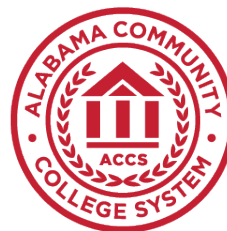


AT A GLANCE WBL INVENTORY

| WBL Type | Is the workplace activity aligned with the job specific coursework? | What is the typical duration? | Is there a paid option? | Is there an opportunity to earn credit? | Type of activity | Does my organization or program offer this? |
|-------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Job Shadowing | NO | 1 Day | NO | NO | A | |
| Career Fair/Expo | NO | 1 Day | NO | NO | A | |
| Employability Skill Training | Sometimes | Varies | NO | YES | A/E | |
| Industry Tours | NO | 1 Day | NO | NO | A | |
| Simulated Workplace | YES | 1-2 Semesters | NO | YES | A/E | |
| Externship | NO | 1-2 Weeks | Maybe | NO | A/E | |
| Internship | Sometimes | Varies | Maybe | Maybe | A/E/P | |
| Clinical/Practicum Field Experience | YES | 1-2 Semesters | Maybe | YES | E/P | |
| Cooperative Education | NO | Varies | YES | YES | E/P | |
| On-the-Job Learning | YES | Varies | YES | Maybe | P | |
| Pre-Apprenticeship | YES | Varies | Maybe | YES | A/E/P | |
| Registered Apprenticeship | YES | 1-4 Years | YES | YES | P | |
| Industry Recognized Apprenticeship | YES | 1-4 Years | YES | YES | P | |

A - Awareness E - Exploration P - Preparation

Governor Ivey would like to extend her appreciation to all of the state agencies who have committed a great deal of time and energy to this project. The success of work-based learning is a team effort, requiring collaboration among many stakeholders including employers, education institutions, and diverse state agencies. These partners' dedication to expanding work-based learning is a key to success in strengthening our talent pipelines and ensuring that Alabama citizens are on paths to good jobs and promising careers. Integrating work and education increases the value and authenticity of training programs, providing employers with the skilled workers they need to keep Alabama's economy moving forward.



FIND MORE INFORMATION:

Ready to Work

alabamareadytowork.org

K-12 CTE

www.alsde.edu/sec/cte

ACCS CTE

info.accs.edu/index.cfm/workforce-development/career-technical-education

Alabama Simulated Workplace Manual

www.alsde.edu/sec/wfd

Career Success Guides

alabamaworks.com/successguides

Pre-apprenticeship, Registered Apprenticeship, IRAP

www.alapprentice.org

Alabama Workforce Council

alabamaworks.com/alabama-workforce-council

Videos highlighting student success stories and WBL in Alabama

aptv.org/education/american-graduate



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