Defining Work-Based Learning at Your School District

WBL is comprised of three components:

1. Alignment of classroom and workplace learning (pre-activity).
2. Application of academic, technical, and employability skills in a work setting.
3. Support from classroom or workplace mentors upon reflection of experiences (post-activity).

Time to Reflect Questions:

1. How does your school district define WBL?

2. If your definition doesn't currently include the three components in the WBL framework, how can you alter it to encompass them?

3. Write two new options for defining WBL in your district below to workshop with stakeholders.

4. Based on the WBL opportunities listed below, check the types that would count towards WBL requirements in your state?

Types of WBL Opportunities

☐ Job Shadow   ☐ Cooperative Education   ☐ Service Learning
☐ Internships   ☐ Paid Work Experience   ☐ Simulated Work Experience
☐ Volunteering   ☐ Career Mentorship   ☐ Workplace Tours
☐ Student-Led Enterprises   ☐ Practicum   ☐ Informational Interviews

Stage 1 - Expanding Early Career Awareness at Your School District

Reflect on how your school district currently offers early career awareness to students with the questions below.

1. What activities are elementary school students involved in related to career awareness?

2. How are middle school students involved in career awareness?

3. Are all students in your school district receiving the same lesson plans or engaging in the same career awareness activities?

4. Is there a current curriculum or software in place to guide early career awareness activities? If not, who would be involved in the search and implementation of new career readiness curriculum and software?

5. If you wanted to start a new career awareness initiative for elementary or middle school students, who would need to be involved?

Stage 2 - Implementing Career Exploration at Your School District

Review how your school district offers career exploration for students with the questions below.

1. What career exploration activities are middle school students involved in?

2. How are high school students involved in career exploration?

3. Do all students in your school or district have the opportunity to participate in the same career exploration activities?

4. Is there a current curriculum or software in place to ensure equitable access to career exploration?

5. How are your career exploration initiatives tailored to individual student interests?

6. If you were to build out your career exploration avenues, who would need to be involved?

Stage 3 - Building Career Preparation Opportunities at Your School

Review how your school district offers career preparation for students with the questions below.

1. What career preparation activities are middle school students involved in?

2. How are high school students involved in career preparation?

3. Through which avenues do all students in your school or district have the opportunity to participate in the same career preparation activities?

4. Is there a current curriculum or software in place to ensure equitable access to career preparation?

5. How are your career preparation initiatives tailored to individual student interests?

6. If you were to build out your career preparation initiatives, who would need to be involved?

Stage 4 - Advancing Career Training at Your School

Review how your school district offers career training for students with the questions below.

1. What career preparation activities are middle school students involved in?

2. How are high school students involved in career preparation?

3. Through which avenues do all students in your school or district have the opportunity to participate in the same career preparation activities?

Key Considerations - Creating Inclusive Opportunities

Review how your school district is creating inclusive opportunities with the questions below.

1. How are the WBL experiences your school district currently offers inclusive opportunities for all students?

2. What is one program that you could expand to make it accessible and inclusive for all?

3. What supports would you need to expand programming to ensure it's inclusive?

4. What action can you take next to progress at least one of your programs towards being inclusive for all students?

Key Considerations - Promoting Student Choice & Autonomy

Reflect on how your school district currently promotes student choice and autonomy with the questions below.

1. How does your school district currently enable students to explore career interests?

2. How do students at your school choose the CTE or career training program they participate in?

3. What is one area you can identify in which greater student autonomy could be implemented?

4. What support do you need to achieve greater student autonomy in the identified area?

5. What actions will you take to act on improving student choice in the identified initiative?

Key Considerations - Creating Collaborative WBL Experiences

Reflect on how your school district can enable collaborative WBL experiences with the questions below.

1. How does your school district currently enable collaborative work on WBL initiatives?

2. What is one area you can identify in which greater collaboration can be implemented?

3. What support do you need to achieve greater collaboration for WBL programs?

4. What actions will you take to act on creating a collaborative ecosystem within your school district?

Key Considerations - Providing Sustainable WBL Experiences

Reflect on how your school district can provide sustainable WBL experiences with the questions below.

1. How does your school district currently offer high-quality work experiences?

2. Do students participating in WBL opportunities feel that they are gaining relevant skills?

3. What support do you need to achieve greater sustainability in your WBL programs?

4. What actions will you take to act on creating sustainable WBL experiences within your school district?

Key Considerations - Defining Clear, Trackable Measurements

Reflect on how your school district can define clear, trackable measurements with these questions.

1. Does your school district currently have a definition for WBL?

2. What WBL goals does your school have? Are they communicated to all stakeholders?

3. How does your school district track WBL activities?

4. Does your school district have a defined team to review WBL data?

5. How often does your school district review WBL data and program impact?

6. What technology would be helpful in effectively tracking WBL activities and impact?

7. What actions will you take to act on improving WBL tracking and reporting to evaluate program effectiveness?

Key Considerations - Providing Opportunities to Develop Transferrable Skills

Reflect on how your school district currently provides opportunities to develop transferrable skills with the questions below.

1. How does your school district currently enable students to explore career interests?

2. How do students at your school choose the CTE or career training program they participate in?

3. What is one area you can identify in which greater student autonomy could be implemented?

4. What support do you need to achieve greater student autonomy in the identified area?

5. What actions will you take to act on improving student choice in the identified initiative?

District WBL Program Maturity Evaluation

Categorize your district's current WBL framework using the rating scale provided below.

1 = A strong **disagreement**.	**3** = Neutral.	**5** = A strong **agreement**.

1.   My school has a clear definition for its work-based learning activities.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

2.   Students at my school have a variety of work-based learning experiences to choose from.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

3.   My school has a defined team of individuals that oversee work-based learning experiences.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

4.   My school's staff members are supported in identifying work-based learning opportunities and partners for students.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

5.   My school district has a set process for setting up industry partnerships to streamline work-based learning.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

6.   My industry partners know the best practices to serve students with their work-based learning opportunities offered.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

7.   My school has defined activities for how work-based learning is connected with classroom learning.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

8.   My school has work-based learning opportunities for ALL students beginning in elementary school through high school.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

9.   My school has a formal policy to allow or require internships and/or other work-based learning opportunities to count for credit toward graduation.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

10.   My school has a formal process in place to track student participation in work-based learning opportunities and their outcomes.

   1 ☐   2 ☐   3 ☐   4 ☐   5 ☐

Total the sum of each of the numbers you circled between 1-5 for all questions:

10-25   Review insights to **BUILD** a formal WBL program for your school district.
26-39   Review strategies to **STRENGTHEN** your WBL program and then elevate.
40-50   Look for ideas to **ELEVATE** your WBL program to maximize impact.

Setting SMART Goals Worksheet Example

Using the following SMART Goal framework, you can build goals with a higher chance for success.

- **Functional Goals:** Involve a task or a project.
- **Aspirational Goals:** Related to personal growth.
- **Short-Term Goals:** Set to complete in the near-future.
- **Long-Term Goals:** Evolve over time.

	EXAMPLE	CREATE A GOAL
INITIAL GOAL	Provide at least one WBL opportunity to high school students at my school district prior to graduation.	
S SPECIFIC	Bring a local industry speaker to engage juniors in a hands-on activity during core classes (Math, Science, English) on staggering days to ensure all students have an opportunity to participate.	
M MEASURABLE	We will track attendance of students in the classes and utilize a handout activity that students must turn in for completion to track student engagement.	
A ACHIEVABLE	We will work with existing district partners and continue to build additional partnerships to expand the program in the future.	
R RELAVENT	Students will get to choose to participate in a WBL opportunity related to their career interests.	
T TIME-BASED	By the beginning of the 2025-26 school year measures will be in place to run this program.	
SMART GOAL	By the beginning of the 2025-26 school year, we will engage local industry partners to provide a WBL project in three core classes to get juniors involved in WBL opportunites that may align to their career interests. Student engagement and attendance will be tracked via our student information system.	

WBL Program Checklists: BUILD - 1

Setting the Stage with Stakeholders

☐ Identify key WBL stakeholders within your district.
- These may include Curriculum Directors, Principals, WBL Coordinators, Counselors, Educators, and more.
- Create a set, recurring time for program review with key stakeholders.

☐ Define WBL for your school district, aligned to state guidelines.

☐ Develop SMART goals for WBL within your school district.

☐ Create a vision statement for offering WBL within your school district.

☐ Decide what types of WBL opportunities you will begin offering students aligned to your goals.

☐ Decide who will be supervising each WBL program planned within your district.
- Make arrangements for WBL and CTE teachers to obtain any necessary certifications.
- Determine who will be providing job coaching to students on the work site.
- Increase flexibility for awarding credits and acknowledge various paths to teacher certification to allow for nontraditional teachers in WBL programs.

☐ Identify WBL participation barriers currently in place within your school district.

☐ Identify funding sources that may be available to support your goals, if needed.

☐ Write a concise pitch of your goals for WBL in your district to gain buy-in.

☐ Secure approval from key stakeholders and administrators to move forward.

☐ Complete necessary documentation to formalize your WBL programs, especially those with credentialing opportunities.

Data & Opportunity Management

☐ Determine who will collect and maintain data on WBL experiences.

☐ Determine how and what data will be collected on WBL experiences.

☐ Identify technology solutions to streamline WBL programs and reporting.

☐ Identify how students will enroll in WBL opportunities.

☐ Create a process for student enrollment in WBL opportunities, ensuring equitable access.

WBL Program Checklists: BUILD - 2

Student Considerations

☐ Accommodate large blocks of time off-campus (or even locate courses in employer facilities).

☐ Arrange for transportation.

☐ Determine how families will be communicated with related to students' WBL opportunities and progress.

Connecting Classroom & Career Learning

☐ Connect classroom learning to employment and careers.

☐ Select core classes that WBL projects can be incorporated into to expose all students to WBL opportunities throughout their high school experience.

☐ Determine how skills training will be incorporated into curriculum and CTE classes to support WBL opportunities and equitable access for all students.

Business & Community Partnerships

☐ Identify necessary community partnerships to be developed.

☐ Reach out to local businesses to gain buy-in on participation with identified WBL opportunities.

☐ Determine, if applicable, which other community agencies and services (ACCES-VR, Pre-ETS, etc.) may support students in meeting goals for their WBL experiences.

WBL Program Checklists: STRENGTHEN - 1

Data & Opportunity Management

- ☐ Create a systematic approach to address WBL barriers to maximize reach and equitable access.
- ☐ Identify tracking measures and key performance indicators to review program impact and effectiveness year-over-year.
- ☐ Implement a software to seamlessly track WBL opportunities and student enrollment for clear reporting, if a district-wide program is not currently in place.

Student Considerations

- ☐ Empower students to explore their career interests.
- ☐ Prepare students for their WBL opportunities with classroom lessons.
- ☐ Create a positive and supportive learning environment in which students feel safe to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them.
- ☐ Model and incorporate lessons on self-regulation skills, such as goal setting, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and reflecting.
- ☐ Review opportunities with students to ensure right fit.
- ☐ Personalize approaches to allow each student to earn certifications at the pace appropriate for them rather than on timelines prescribed by semester and yearly schedules.
- ☐ Connect students to right fit opportunities.

WBL Program Checklists: STRENGTHEN - 2

Connecting Classroom & Career Learning

☐ Move toward competency-based approaches to assess at the level of skill rather than the level of the course.

☐ Partner with career development staff, employment professionals, job placement specialists, or internship coordinators to help participants reach their learning goals.

☐ Create a high quality WBL training plan to assist the student in making a successful transition from student to trainee/employee.

☐ Empower staff to identify and incorporate WBL activities within their classes to enhance curriculum and improve access for all students.

☐ Identify areas to expand and enhance existing WBL opportunities for students.

Business & Community Partnerships

☐ Visit work site prior to placing students.

☐ Visit work site at least once while a student is participating in an on-the-job WBL experience.

☐ Conduct post-opportunity evaluations and relfections to measure outcomes and success.

☐ Check in with case managers, transition specialists, or other educators as necessary.

☐ Evaluate existing WBL experiences for age-appropriate relevancy.

☐ Ensure key stakeholders are aware of all WBL activities/initiatives available within your school district and document these for annual review.

☐ Coordinate an internal team to ensure WBL program sustainability despite any identified barriers.

☐ Ensure WBL is facilitated by trained, qualified, and credentialed professionals.

WBL Program Checklists: ELEVATE - 1

Revisiting Program Essentials

☐ Identify policy and financial levers for expanding access to WBL programs through partnerships and funding.

☐ Implement a a collaborative IEP/Vocational Rehabilitation/Disability services team to provide student WBL support needs.

☐ Provide team members with ongoing professional development opportunities to ensure the highest level of career advising can be provided to students.

Data & Opportunity Management

☐ Utilize data to reflect on the following aspects of your WBL program to make systematic improvements and revisit WBL goals for your school district:

- Participation barriers.

- Program completion.

- Opportunity types to expand upon based on student requests

Student Considerations

☐ Survey students to learn what opportunities they'd like access to in the community.

☐ Create a process to address individual student support needs to encourage participation in WBL experiences.

☐ Encourage collaboration and communication between students and WBL leaders in your school.

- Ex: Create a student committee to advise on opportunity expansion and conduct business outreach for hands-on learning.

WBL Program Checklists: ELEVATE - 2

Connecting Classroom & Career Learning

☐ Evaluate core class projects to ensure all students have the opportunity to gain exposure to career readiness and WBL activities throughout their education.

- Review this process for elementary, middle school, and high school students aligned with the four stages of career readiness to set students up for success from an early age.

Business & Community Partnerships

☐ Expand your WBL opportunities by determining which businesses and community partners best meet the needs of the student and their particular interests.

☐ Foster relationships with local business partners and community leaders to keep a pulse on emerging trends in your local economy to engage students in meaningful WBL experiences. Ensure that the employer (immediate supervisor) implements a training plan to include the following:

- Identify tasks for which training can be provided at the workplace.
- Adding tasks to the training plan that are unique to the workplace.
- Supervising the student's training for specific job tasks.
- Assessing the student's strengths and weaknesses in completing tasks at the workplace.
- Have point-of-contact visits to the workplace periodically to discuss student's progress.

Your WBL Action Plan Summary

Here you can put everything into a one page summary to help gather your thoughts and layout your action plan to build, strengthen, and elevate your WBL program.

1. WBL definition for your school district:

2. Your primary goals:

3. Stakeholders needed to obtain goals:

4. Identified funding opportunities to pursue: