



Introduction to Work-Based Learning

WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL) is a proactive approach to bridging the gap between high school and high-demand, high-skill careers. WBL activities begin by helping students develop a broad understanding and awareness of industries and possible careers that are available to them. Examples include career speakers and workplace tours. Over time these experiences narrow in focus as students find a good fit, learn what post-secondary education is necessary for success, and practice the technical and soft skills to enter those careers later in life. Examples of more focused experiences include internships and apprenticeships.

Goals for Work-Based Learning in Tennessee

Broaden student access: Improve policies, trainings and tools that help districts offer more opportunities

Deepen learning experiences: Increase the focus on 21st Century skills, such as critical thinking and communication and on “soft skills” together with academics

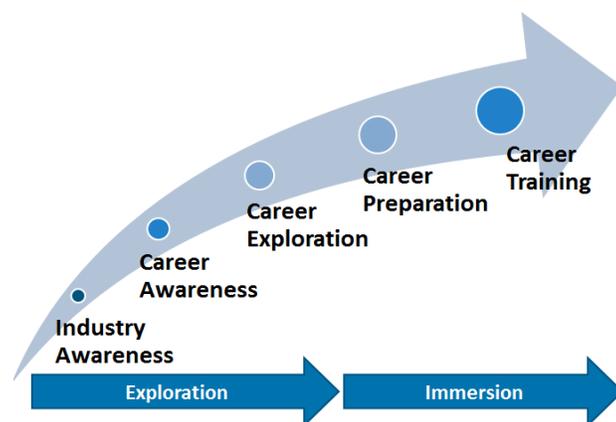
Engage communities: Help communities convene to plan for systematic, sequential learning experiences

Successful Work-Based Learning

Systematic input from professionals: The business community and educators plan together to create or simulate real-world projects and experiences for students. Local employers lend their knowledge and expertise to provide opportunities for engaging, real-world learning.

Depth of experience: Employers supplement classroom learning by providing speakers, tours, project feedback, and even internships or work experience for more advanced students. Experiences build on one another to help students grow.

Connection to curriculum: Academic, professional and interpersonal skills introduced in class are reinforced in practice. Students set goals for their learning, participate in collaborative work that allows them to think critically and communicate effectively, and demonstrate the personal and social skills that are necessary in postsecondary education and careers.



Work-based skills to be emphasized and practiced fall under these five broad categories:

- **Application of Academic Knowledge and Skills**
- **Application of Industry-Focused Knowledge and Technical Skills**
- **Career Knowledge and Navigation Skills**
- **21st Century Learning and Innovation Skills**
- **Personal and Social Skills**

The Employability Skills Checklist provides more detail about skills in each of these categories and can guide the development of learning objectives for each experience.

Benefits of the Local Pipeline:

Students gain valuable work experience and skills that help them find a good career fit, pursue necessary post-secondary opportunities, and support high-demand, high-skill careers.

Local employers benefit from a customized recruitment pipeline that supports their workforce needs and emphasizes critical skills.

Postsecondary institutions benefit when students are better prepared in high school to pursue high-demand, high-skill career training.