NTACT THE COLLABORATIVE
Improving Opportunities & Outcomes

Work-Based Learning Experiences

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Guiding Questions | Activities | Progress & Outcome Indicators

Work-Based Learning Experiences is one of the five required pre-employment transition services designed to:

- Include in-school or after-school opportunities, or experiences outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that are provided in an integrated environment in the community to the maximum extent possible, and
- Strengthen opportunities for students, including those with the most significant disabilities to practice & improve workplace skills in competitive integrated work settings before exiting secondary education, and throughout post-secondary training, when applicable.

Types of Work-Based Learning Experiences

- Job shadowing
- Practicum
- Service learning
- Career mentorship
- Informational interviews
- Workplace tours/field trips
- Volunteering
- Student-led enterprises
- Internships (paid and unpaid)
- Paid and non-paid work experiences

Guiding Questions

1. ***Awareness*: Does the student have a general awareness of work or what it means to have a job?**
   a. Important for students to become aware of the concept of work through in-school work experiences, on-site or on-line workplace tours, informational interviews, and volunteering.
   b. Raise expectations of students, especially those with the most significant disabilities, and their families, to imagine what the world of work might look like for them.
   c. Students that have worked or had related experiences, understand why they had trouble keeping that position, and/or why they experienced any specific challenges/issues in the environment.

2. ***Exploration*: Has the student had opportunities to practice and/or improve workplace skills?**
   a. Students gain hands-on experience exploring careers in various work settings/work environments through opportunities like job shadowing, service learning, and paid work experiences.
   b. Some students may need multiple, layered work-based learning experiences to help them identify an employment goal, depending on their individual support needs. Not just one and done.

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3. ***Planning and Preparation*: Is the student prepared to use the workplace to gain the knowledge and skills that will help them connect school experiences to real-life work activities and future career opportunities?**

   a. Important for students to gain work experience in diverse career pathways, building on their strengths and interests, leading to more meaningful post-secondary employment and training goals.

   b. Some students may have worked part-time, but they have never had an opportunity for a job within their chosen career pathway, which might require more preparation, and skills.

   c. Essential to determine if a student will need on-site supports, auxiliary aids and services, and/or assistive technology prior to participating in a work-based learning experience.

4. ***Paid Work-Based Learning Experiences*: Does the student/family understand the impact of participation in paid work-based learning experiences?**

   a. If the student is participating in a paid work-based learning experience, the student wages are to be paid at no less than minimum wage.

   b. It is important to determine what entity will be paying the student's wages and acting as the employer of record. Form I-9 is used to verify the identity and authorization for employment of individuals who are hired in the United States. Therefore, whoever is acting as the employer of record needs to complete and sign the employer section of the I-9 before employment commences for the student.

   c. It is important for both VR, the LEA, and other agency partners to become familiar with federal and state labor laws, to include Department of Labor (DOL) guidelines, to ensure work-based learning experiences are being developed in accordance with all applicable labor laws.

   d. It is important for both VR, the LEA, and other agency partners to consider the effects of wages on students' Social Security (SSA) benefits (if applicable) and provide information, as appropriate, to increase student understanding of and compliance with SSA reporting requirements. A general discussion to address and parent/family concerns regarding how their child's participation in paid work experiences may affect SSI benefits is an important consideration.

   e. Although many states no longer have individuals with disabilities working in subminimum wage employment, it is important to remain aware of Section 511 of WIOA and continue to follow the appropriate guidelines as required to be outlined in the formal interagency agreement between State Educational Agencies and VR.

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Examples of Activities

1. Design virtual industry tours with businesses from diverse career pathways to learn about the business, meet employees, ask questions and observe work in progress.
2. Recruit business mentors and/or VR business specialists to help students conduct informational interviews with self-employed entrepreneurs via a "Shark Tank" style approach, and then flip it, so the students can pitch their self-employment idea to VR business specialists or business mentors.
3. Coordinate "groundhog job shadowing" events/opportunities at local businesses in February.
4. Create opportunities for multiple work experiences, paid and unpaid, within the local community, rotation among positions, with exposure to multiple supervisors.
5. Provide opportunities for students to practice job tasks using on-site supports and/or general assistive technology in a competitive, integrated work settings.
6. Identify jobs/careers where students could work from home and discuss key work skills necessary to succeed in this type of work environment. Engage the parents/family in this discussion/activity.
7. Recruit individuals, including former students who have disabilities, that can offer first-hand accounts regarding their work experiences, lessons learned and benefits of work. Invite the parents/family.
8. Coordinate local workplace tours/field trips throughout the year in association with a nationally recognized day or event, such as "Arbor Day", or "Taco Tuesday", and visit related businesses.
9. For students with high support needs, preparation for work-based learning experiences may take longer, and therefore activities should be designed to:
    - Ensure students have been afforded informed choice to apply for VR services in order to receive additional VR services, such as coaching, transportation, etc. if needed
    - Raise expectations of students, their families and employers by providing opportunities for students to demonstrate their unique abilities and contributions
    - Match the student's interests, skills and abilities to the needs of the business
    - Accommodate each student's individual communication and support needs
    - Allow a para-professional, teacher, occupational therapist, speech and language therapist, etc., who is familiar with the student's current level of support needs to participate and provide additional support to assist the student in completing the activity or work experience.
    - Involve more trial and error on the work site because transference of skills from one environment to another can be difficult – exposure to more experiences offers more information (body language, reactions, etc.)

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Student Progress & Outcome Indicators

Identify how student participation, progress, and outcomes for work-based learning will be tracked, reported, measured, and shared. Consider the following:

- Identify learning objectives and/or outcome indicators in order to:
  - *evaluate and document student progress*
  - *determine if the student could benefit from a continuum of work-based learning experiences*
  - *identify any on-site supports, auxiliary aids and services, and/or assistive technology needed by the student to be successful in a work setting*
  - *determine if no further work-based learning experiences as part of pre-employment transition services are needed at this time*
- Conduct Pre-Post Surveys.
- Identify curricula/activities that are interactive and keep students engaged.
- Implement activities/events that incorporate student voice and decision-making.
- Incorporate opportunities after each activity for student self-reflection.
- Share student progress and outcomes with the student, IEP team, 504 coordinator, school contacts, internal VR team members, and parent/family, as appropriate.

Key Considerations

- VR is the only entity that can provide or arrange for the provision of work-based learning as a pre-employment transition service to students with disabilities.
- Since local education agencies (LEAs) are obligated to provide transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), **and** they have the authority to determine how/when students can access work-based learning experiences during the school day; it is important for VR and the LEA to communicate when students will be participating in work experiences to ensure timely and appropriate student access, and that there is no duplication of services.
- Ensure students are actively engaged, by building in opportunities for self-reflection before, during and after each work-based learning experience, and allowing them to choose their work experiences.
- Consider outreach to local Career Technical Education (CTE) programs to coordinate work-based learning experiences and supports for students with disabilities. Many CTE's include work-based learning experiences in their programs, and coordination could be a win-win!
- Consider the development of a written agreement to outline roles and responsibilities for all parties, including the family, along with a point of contact, clear expectations for liability, transportation arrangements, and if the work experience will be paid or unpaid.

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Examples of Learning Objectives/Outcome Indicators

Work-based Learning Experiences
1. Conducts informational interviews with individuals to obtain information about employment
2. Participates in job shadowing experience(s)/job site visit(s)
3. Familiar with employers' safety concerns/emergency procedures and addresses them appropriately
4. Understands how to ask for assistance from co-workers and/or supervisors
5. Demonstrates an understanding of how the number of hours worked correlates to the employer's pay period, and wages earned
6. Understands employer and industry expectations for work performance
7. Learns job skills related to the expectations set for a position
8. Receives guidance from people practicing in an industry
9. Develops networking relationships with business mentors/employers
10. Obtains a reference or letter of recommendation from at least one business mentor/employer
11. Understands and uses on-site supports, auxiliary aids and services, and/or assistive technology to participate in a work-based learning experience
12. Performs job tasks at a competitive level with or without on-site supports and/or general assistive technology in a competitive, integrated work settings
13. Identifies the benefits of work in a competitive, integrated employment setting
14. Understands SSA reporting requirements, and how their participation in paid work experiences may affect SSI benefits
15. Reflects upon past work experiences and understands the successes and/or challenges experienced

Curriculum options and more resources can be found at the link below:

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