



WORK-BASED LEARNING CAREER GUIDE

Mission: Working in partnership with each family and the community, it is the mission of the district to educate responsible lifelong learners so that each student possesses the skills, knowledge, creativity, sense of self-worth, and values necessary to thrive in and contribute to a diverse and changing world.

Shared Vision: WDMCS will be a caring community of learners that knows and lifts every child. We will inspire joy in learning. Our schools will excel at preparing each student for his or her life journey.

Portrait of a Graduate: A West Des Moines Community Schools graduate will possess the essential skills and integrity to communicate, collaborate, and solve problems as a confident citizen, embracing our diverse and changing world.

Work-Based Learning: *Work-based learning includes a continuum of structured activities utilizing the partnership between workplaces and education to engage student learning.* Through experiences with industry professionals, participants are able to foster first-hand engagement with in-depth application of academic, technical and professional skills to the tasks required of a given career field while meeting specific learning objectives. Work-based learning is a progression through awareness, exploration, preparation and training to support student learning for future success.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The West Des Moines Community School District strives to link all student educational experiences to the relevance of their professional future. We are working to build a system that purposefully asks and answers questions about when students are going to use their academic learning in the real world. It is designed to help students connect learning experiences from the classroom to a lifetime of career success. Through building the relationship among academic skill achievement, goal setting, and career exploration, all students will set goals and create a path where they are equipped to successfully pursue those goals.

The district combines multiple elements in its delivery model to support student learning for future success: Awareness, Exploration, Preparation, and Training. Listed throughout each of these layered phases are the 5 Essential Components: Self- Understanding, Career Information, Career Exploration, Post-Secondary Exploration, and Career & Post-Secondary Decision. Also articulated in the district's [Career Guidance Plan](#) are critical staff for implementing and ensuring these experiences for students.

Last, this guide draws attention to associated resource needs and anticipated challenges that lie ahead as the work progresses over time.

2A. DELIVERY MODEL

AWARENESS:

- **Classroom Speakers** - current representatives of active professionals that will focus on the elements of both their careers and the industry. This may be face to face or virtual experience and often includes components of students' preparation for the speaker and a reflection of the learning experiences as it relates to their own professional exploration and preparation.
 - [Iowa Intermediary Network](#)
 - Whitney Riggs- DMACC
 - District Curriculum Leads and Building Counselors
 - Lunch and Learn Exhibits
 - Career Days (JH)
 - Collaborative Field Experience Instructors
- **Lunch & Learn Events** - bi-monthly events hosted at Valley High School that highlight various career fields. Local businesses and industry representatives support student learning and awareness of high demand jobs, associated training, and a connection between careers and current learning experiences.
- **Essential Life Skills** - feedback of the following skills is given in each class:
 - **Continuous Learning** - thoughtfully considers feedback and works toward accomplishing goals.
 - **Collaboration** - interacts to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams to accomplish a common goal or task.
 - **Communication** - conveys ideas and information respectfully, purposefully, and effectively through multiple means.
 - **Critical Thinking** - accesses and analyzes key information to develop, create, or innovate solutions to complex challenges.
 - **Professionalism** - demonstrates learner readiness through self-regulation, responsibility, and integrity.

EXPLORATION:

- **Authentic Projects** - career exploration experiences that engages industry partners through meaningful projects completed by students.
 - West Des Moines continues to implement Project-Based Learning across the district. The elements of [Essential Unit/Project Design](#) are most deeply implemented at 2 elementary schools and small teams at each junior high, and provide a structure for a strong connection between classroom learning and community engagement.
 - [Clearinghouse Future Ready Iowa](#) - provides access to an ever-growing repository of authentic project-based learning opportunities

- **Service Learning Programs** - the purpose of our Silver Cord program is to encourage volunteerism and give students an opportunity to experience the joy of giving back to the community. Volunteering provides a constructive use of time, fosters the exploration of career interests, supports youth seeking employment and college admission, and gives new graduates the confidence to serve in leadership roles after high school.
 - [Silver Cord](#)
 - iCare
- **Field Trips** - worksite exploratory events where students leave the classroom/school to tour a workplace. Students engage with industry to learn about job opportunities, career pathways, and interact with industry professionals across multiple jobs within the career field.
 - [Iowa Intermediary Network](#)
 - [DMACC Career Exploration Events and Worksite Industry Tours](#)
 - District Curriculum Leads
- **Job Shadowing** - career exploration experience that allows students to explore a specific career of interest by observing an experienced employee performing their typical work duties in a real-world work environment. The job shadowing experience is a temporary (2-8 hours), unpaid exposure to the workplace in an occupational area of interest to the student. Students should receive formalized instruction about their career choice, expectations of the job shadow, how to prepare for their visit and follow-up after the experience. Students should participate in a job shadow after career awareness and exploration activities have been completed to ensure students are matched with careers that best suit their career interests and personalities.

PREPARATION:

- **Professional Skill Workshops** - career preparation experiences that introduce students to the essential skills needed to be successful in the modern workplace. Examples of professional skill workshops include: resume and cover letter writing, job shadow preparation, professional image, workplace ethics, and workplace skills. Skills workshops should include an industry partner. Organizations and events already in place:
 - SkillsUSA
 - Build My Future
 - DECA
- **Resume Building & Mock Interviews** - career preparation experience intended to provide students with the opportunity to develop a resume and professional interviewing skills through feedback and practice interviews with industry partners. Students receive valuable feedback to improve performance in the professional world and learn to network with industry professionals. Students should be prepared to provide professional documents at the time of the interview (resume, cover letter, completed application and portfolio) as well as knowing how to dress, how to respond to interview questions, expected professional interview behavior and how to receive performance feedback professionally.
 - [Classroom "Dress for Success" Poster](#)
- **School-Based Enterprises (SBE)** - career preparation experience where students have the opportunity to run a school store. School-based enterprises provide students with an opportunity to

develop professional skills and career skills, as students learn the different roles and aspects of a successful business while directly managing the school store.

- DECA
- Tiger Perk
- Small businesses projects created within Entrepreneurship class

TRAINING:

- **Internship** - professional training experience providing students opportunities to gain professional and technical skills while under the supervision of an industry professional in a career path of interest. Internships are structured experiences for a set period of time that require student interns to complete real work to reach the specific learning goals. These provide student learners with the opportunity to participate in training while gaining experience in problem-solving, decision-making and skill-building projects at the internship site. Internships may be paid or unpaid opportunities.
- **Quality Pre-Apprenticeship** - training experiences including a set of strategies to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in an apprenticeship training program, meeting US Dept. of Labor requirements that may lead to a Registered Apprenticeship program, called a Quality Pre-Apprenticeship Program. These programs focus on needed basic skills to be successful in an apprenticeship program, introducing students to basic concepts or foundational skills. Valley offerings:
 - Carpenter
 - Floor Layer
- **Registered Apprenticeship** - training experiences that provide on-the-job training or learning (OJT/OJL) with related technical or classroom instruction (RTI), enabling students to earn compensation while they learn a career or trade. Apprentices are employed by the employer/organization during an apprenticeship. Valley's apprenticeships are Registered Apprenticeships, meeting requirements set forth by the United States Department of Labor. RAs provide opportunities for apprentices-earned wages to increase as progression is made through the program. In addition, portable industry credentials are awarded to those who complete RAs. RAs can last between one and five years and a recommended minimum of 44 hours of RTI. [Valley Registered Apprenticeship Programs](#):
 - Certified Nursing Assistant
 - Customer Service Representative
 - Industrial Manufacturing Technician
 - Software Engineer
 - Welder

2B. STAKEHOLDERS

Several stakeholders are vital to ensuring ongoing support and guidance to our staff, counselors, parents, and students. Our district Career and Technical Education Advisory group (CTE Advisory) meets, at a minimum, semi-annually. Any number of key items are discussed at these meetings including current trends

in each related industry, course content relevance to industry needs and industry standards, skills alignment, reviewing assessing technical skill proficiency, workforce projections, job shadowing and internship partnerships, apprenticeship program development and recruitment, etc. Much of the most recent changes to our district CTE programming has been heavily influenced by these 100+ business members in our CTE Advisory.

A second, key stakeholder is our secondary counseling team. Our district Career Guidance Plan is closely aligned with, and connected to, district programming. The learning experiences gained by our counselors as they interact with professionals in our CTE Advisory groups (i.e. Lunch & Learn events and the various other identified activities associated with the plan) are key to ensuring their support of students as they pursue their career goals.

The Perkins V legislation emphasizes equity and equal access to all of our career development programs. In addition, our CLNA data indicates our district should continue seeking ways to have a more demographically-balanced representation of student enrollment across all program areas. Examples include: increasing female enrollment in business and engineering tech classes, increasing males in FCS and health science courses, and the demographic balance between staff and our representative student populations.

2C. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is essential that teachers, school counselors, administrators, and parents understand this Work-Based Career Learning Guide. It may be best to lift the District Career Guidance Plan as a starting point and work with key stakeholders, such as building administration and Building Leadership Teams, to ensure implementation is embedded in School Improvement Plans.

1. **Awareness, Knowledge, and Commitment** - stakeholders across the school system, including businesses, need to be aware of the Work-Based Learning Guide, knowledge of how they can contribute to its implementation at the classroom level, and a commitment to significant contribution.
2. **Embedded Learning** - there is a wealth of currently existing resources available to staff, students, and parents, many of which are either not aware or accessing. Examples include tools like Naviance, course crosswalks to [Career Pathways](#), and ways to lift their students career learning through Awareness and/or Explorations activities.
3. **Leadership** - we have designated Curriculum Leads and a Director who are leading this effort. This leadership team must grow to include building principals who can ensure professional learning expectations are communicated, and instructional coaches who can provide embedded professional development on-demand to staff.

3. STAKEHOLDERS - STAFF

- **Staff - Professional Development (note: see 2C above for professional development detail)**
 - Connecting content to careers
 - Raising awareness of the Work-Base Career Learning Guide
 - Connecting content to career professionals
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4. COSTS AND FUNDING

The vast majority of funding support has been associated with an effort to ensure necessary staff for a work-based learning coordinator and support team members. Teacher Leaders (CTE Curriculum Leads) and a Director of Curriculum currently coordinate implementation of the majority of the district's WBL program. Utilization of grant funding and support from the West Des Moines Board of Directors continues to be key to ongoing staffing, facilities, and equipment needs.

1. Grant funding - we have relied heavily on Carl Perkins and STEM BEST grants for startup costs of our different programs.
 2. Local Business support - numerous local businesses continue to provide in-kind donations of time, feedback, and equipment. Ongoing effort in association with sponsorships is a recent opportunity for businesses to expand upon support levels.
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5. COMMUNITY ASSETS

- School Board approved \$26,000,000 CTE addition at Valley Southwoods Freshman High School
- West Des Moines Chamber of Commerce
- West Des Moines City Council & Economic Development Board
- Cities of Clive and Urbandale chambers and councils
- Iowa Workforce Development
- Greater Des Moines Partnership
- Work-Based Learning Partners
- CTE Advisory: 100+ members representing Eng Tech, Health Sciences, Family Consumer Sciences, Computer Science, and Business
- Dr. Sarah Derry, STEM Regional Manager
- Tanya Hunt, Iowa STEM BEST coordinator
- [CCTC](#) - DMACC Partnership for College and Career Transition Counselor
- [DMACC](#) - Community College partner

- [iJAG](#) - Iowa Jobs for America's Graduates
- Heartland AEA11 - Future Ready Network

Onboarding of Businesses:

In addition to inviting business representatives to be a part of our Advisory Council, we either reach out or respond to those expressing interest and run the following criteria of progression to their level of comfort:

- **Engagement goal:** establish how businesses want to be engaged with schools
- **Connection of prior experience:** review business' experiences working with schools in CTE capacities
- **Career Information interaction 1:** inclusion in our CTE Lunch & Learn events
- **Career Information interaction 2:** involvement in our Encore offerings for targeted student groups
- **Partnership:** partner in existing apprenticeship or CTE Work-Based Learning Experience

6. ICAP: NEXT STEPS FOR GUIDE INTEGRATION

Through the development of this Work-Based Career Learning Guide, there has been discovery of many layers within our systems of opportunities for students to engage in Work-Based experiences. In order to capitalize on current opportunities and grow Work-Based Learning, the following recommendations are made for any number of stakeholders to consider:

- Consider avenues to generate awareness of both this district plan and also celebrate the many embedded opportunities that already exist for students.
 - Launch and/or recognition events
 - Look to celebrate/highlight implementation of WBL projects into the classroom learning experiences
 - Existing video interviews of student experiences shared with teachers, counselors, and others (examples [here](#))
 - Social Media - [Twitter Valley Teaching & Learning](#) account, [WDMCS](#) account, etc.
- Entry Points - facilitate the opportunity for staff to both learn about this guide and find connections within the delivery model.
 - Creating space for student to connect their learning to work experiences (Naviance - Road Trip Nation)
 - Inviting industry professionals to guest speak; focus on not only what they do but how they got there (career pathway, education, work experiences)
 - clearly identified skills and knowledge obtained (derived from standards)
- Consider embedding this School Improvement Plan
 - more access

- BLT awareness
 - Possibility down the road, as awareness becomes more achieved: [Work-Based Learning Micro-Credential Webinars](#) series from the University of Northern Iowa
 - Essentials of Work-Based-Learning
 - Finding and Maintaining Business Partners
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7. PERKINS ALIGNMENT

West Des Moines Community Schools conducts a comprehensive local needs assessment ([CLNA](#)) every other year as a required component of the [Perkins V: Strengthening Career and Technical Education Act for the 21st Century](#). West Des Moines Community School's portion of the state's annual \$13.9 million share continues to serve as a vital funding stream to maintain meaningful, relevant, and a modernized programming opportunity for students. The four focus areas identified by our CLNA include:

- 1) Increasing Parent and Student Awareness of Opportunities
- 2) Increasing Work-Based Learning Engagement
- 3) Maintaining Modern and Relevant Programming that Meets Labor Market Needs
- 4) Equity

All Perkins expenditures must be directly linked to one or more of these focus areas identified by our community.

8. CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

The potential for this work is tremendous and is a change to our current system of approaching student learning outcomes. In addition to pivoting some of our teaching and learning practices, there are a number of challenges and barriers we will need to acknowledge.

- **Funding Must be Available** - there are many priorities placed upon public schools that can shift each legislative session. Our community will need to see the commitment and impact to student outcomes from Work-Based Career Learning opportunities in order to prioritize its value when entering lean economic times or competing initiatives.
- **Doing More with Limited Resources** - many will see this as adding more to our assigned duties. Whether it be bringing in guest speakers or releasing students from part of their school day to participate in an apprenticeship, this requires adults in the system to commit time and energy. Given our most recent success and growth with internships and apprenticeships, we may need to revisit the capacity of our system.
- **Measuring Progress and Delayed Results** - we have done a lot in the last two years and need to celebrate our growth as well as tell the story of what comes next. This plan needs to be shared and have the inclusivity of others in key positions to lift it.
- **Business Support and Mentorship** - when working with business partners, we need to ensure they understand that working with students at any age level may not pay off immediately. Students

learning what they *don't* want to do is just as valuable and learning what they do want to do. Just as important, businesses need mentorship. This may come from another business and/or a developed guidance document when onboarding with a school. Through experience, we have learned the value in having a point person at the business who schools can go to when trying to partner at any level.