Work-Based Learning Definition and Elements

Instruction within a real-world context that allows students to build a bridge from adolescence to adulthood

Assuming an adult role as scholar, worker and citizen in a global economy requires that "young people become autonomous decision makers and problem solvers who [can] reflect on their learning and self-correct."[1] Work-Based Learning that extends the student's learning from school into the workplace is highly effective at helping students achieve these outcomes.

Quality work-based learning activities should include the following:

1) *Defined instructional goals* – these should reflect the viewpoint of the workplace involved, be developmentally appropriate, and include input from the student and the workplace

2) *Goals-based assessment* – with an emphasis on subjective, authentic assessment by non-school professionals, and self-assessment by the students, encouraging students to establish their own definition of success, and milestones for achieving them

3) *Situated learning* – opportunities to learn and practice skills in an authentic work context

4) *Reflective learning* – reflection in a school context allows them to assimilate their learning and transfer it to other settings such as college or job interviews with other companies

5) *Relationship-building* – opportunities to interact with adult professionals outside the school setting

6) *Orientation and coordination between the school and the workplace* – both workplace and school need to articulate their organizational goals to avoid conflict, and ensure the collaboration is designed to support student learning

Work-Based Learning Outcomes

A quality Work-Based Learning activity gives students the opportunity to accomplish the following tasks, with an emphasis on self-assessment, and authentic feedback from adults in industry:

> identify and develop their **strengths**. Strengths are defined as the intersection of students' *interests* (at a task level) and their *ability* or *aptitude*. By learning what tasks, activities and interactions with others provide the most enjoyment to students, we can guide students to careers at which they will persist and succeed.

> Map out **career pathways** where there is a need for workers with their strengths and accessible opportunities. This should include initiating communication with guides and role models who can help students validate and refine their plans

> Develop a portfolio of **accomplishments** that allow students to learn new skills, begin to see what role they can play in a larger organization, and achieve a degree of mastery in authentic settings. Students should be able to present these accomplishments in a concise, professional form – resume statements, application essays, or brief portfolios of work

> Build **relationships** outside the classroom with peers and elders, mentors and sponsors – who can provide a bridge into working communities outside of school or other institutional settings

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[1] Hoffman, *Schooling in the Workplace*, Harvard Education Press, 2011 p. 117.

How Young People Develop a Career

Career Identity – Circumscription and Compromise[2]

Circumscription: By age 14, most students have limited their options in terms of career choice – certain jobs are unacceptable because they have too low a status, and others because they are perceived as too risky or their community rejects them.

> *In exploring career choices, it is important to understand what social and personal space the young person sees as acceptable according to their community, and their view of themselves.*

Compromise: This is the beginning of adulthood, where young people may begin to give up idealistic, value-driven career choices in favor of choices that they see as more easily accessible.

> *To help students pursue challenging, rewarding careers, we need to help them find the connections that are immediately available to them that connect their current social location to communities that offer more opportunity.*

Engagement / Skills Development – Conditions for Learning (Flow)[3]

The key question in designing work-based learning activities is finding a balance between four factors:

- engagement of the student's interest and aptitude, within the context of the job to be done
- the challenge presented to the young person, and their skill / ability to meet it
- the clarity of goals
- immediacy of feedback

Helping them find balance in these areas support your young person in learning to maintain focus on the task at hand, and encourages them to work hard by finding pleasure in the task.

 This psychological state is called *flow*, and it's where we do our best work, and our best learning

Relationships – The Strength of Weak Ties[4]

Up to 80% of people find jobs through someone they know, *but not well*. Young people in disadvantaged communities need opportunities to connect with people who can provide a bridge into another community that has additional opportunities that may be lacking in their neighborhood.

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[2] Gottfredson, Linda "Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription, Compromise and Self-Creation," Career Choice and Development, 4th Edition, edited by Duane Brown. Jossey-Bass, 2002.

[3] Mihaly Cskizentmihalyi and Barbara Schneider *Becoming Adult: How Teenagers Prepare for the World of Work*, Basic Books 2000

[4] Granovetter, Mark "The Strength of Weak Ties," American Journal of Sociology, Volume 78, Issue 6 (May 1973) 1360-1380

Learning Goals

According to guidelines from New York State, Learning Goals should include two kinds of skills / content:

- *Technical or academic skills*, identified in collaboration with the worksite, that support the students' CTE Program, or academic program (with an emphasis on the Common Core).
- *Career readiness / interpersonal Skills*, based on a State or Nationally-recognized list of skills such as the NY State Department of Education CDOS standards, the Federal SCANS Skills, or similar (see below).

New York State CDOS Skills

Career Development (1)
1. Demonstrate knowledge about the world of work
2. Apply decision-making skills in selection of a career option
3. Analyze skills and abilities in a career option
Integrated Learning (2)
1. Demonstrate integration and application
2. Use academic knowledge and skills
3. Research, interpret, analyze, and evaluate information
Universal Foundation Skills (3a)
1. Basic Skills – "the ability to read, write, listen, and speak as well as perform arithmetical and mathematical functions."
2. Thinking Skills – problem solving, experimenting, and focused observation and allow the application of knowledge to new and unfamiliar situations.
3. Personal Qualities – competence in self-management and the ability to plan, organize, and take independent action.
4. Interpersonal Skills – teamwork and cooperation in large and small groups in family, social, and work situations.
5. Technology – the process and product of human skill and ingenuity in designing and creating things from available resources to satisfy personal and societal needs and wants.
6. Managing Information – the ability to access and use information obtained from other people, community resources, and computer networks.
7. Managing Resources – the application of financial and human factors, and the elements of time and materials to successfully carry out a planned activity.
8. Systems - understanding of and ability to work within natural and constructed systems.

Federal SCANS Skills

Competencies	Foundation Skills
Resources	**Basic Skills**
C1. Allocates Time	F1. Reading
C2. Allocates Money	F2. Writing
C3. Allocates Materials and Facility Resources	F3. Arithmetic
C4. Allocates Human Resources	F4. Mathematics
Information	F5. Listening
C5. Acquires and Evaluates Information	F6. Speaking
C6. Organizes and Maintains Information	**Thinking Skills**
C7. Interprets and Communicates Information	F7. Creative Thinking
C8. Uses Computers to Process Information	F8. Decision Making
Interpersonal	F9. Problem Solving
C9. Participates as a Member of a Team	F10. Seeing Things in the Mind's Eye
C10. Teaches Others	F11. Knowing How to Learn
C11. Serves Clients/Customers	F12. Reasoning
C12. Exercises Leadership	**Personal Qualities**
C13. Negotiates to Arrive at a Decision	F13. Responsibility
C14. Works with Cultural Diversity	F14. Self-Esteem
Systems	F15. Sociability
C15. Understands Systems	F16. Self-Management
C16. Monitors and Corrects Performance	F17. Integrity/Honesty
C17. Improves or Designs Systems	
Technology	
C18. Selects Technology	
C19. Applies Technology to Task	
C20. Maintains and Troubleshoots Technology	