Bethel University

Spark

2021

Work-Based Learning Impact on Community, School, and Student

Megan Jacob
Bethel University

WORK-BASED LEARNING IMPACT ON COMMUNITY, SCHOOL, AND STUDENT

A MASTER'S THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

BY

MEGAN JACOB

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

April 2021

BETHEL UNIVERSITY

WORK-BASED LEARNING IMPACT ON COMMUNITY, SCHOOL, AND STUDENT

Megan Jacob

April 2021

APPROVED

Advisor's Name: Meghan Cavalier, Ed.D.
Program Director's Name: Lisa Silmser, Ed.D.

Abstract

This literature review with application examined work-based learning programs at the high school level, and those programs impact preparing students for the workforce. Providing experiences for students to interact with career fields they are interested in will give them an in-depth understanding of what their day-to-day will consist of. Students will choose if that career is one they want to pursue, if they want to continue their education, if they will be taking on student loan debt, deciding between public and private universities, and what training they will complete. Being more knowledgeable about their future career paths will improve the skills gap and student loan debt in our country. There are nearly 7 million unfilled jobs in the United States, and many business leaders say the lack of available workers is one of their most significant challenges (Glassman, 2020). There is a substantial need for qualified trade school graduates. They can make a great living while working in a job that helps our economy and community thrive (Caprino, 2018). A solid work-based learning program will help prepare students for whatever career path they choose, benefit the school district and the local business community.

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

A skilled workforce is needed for businesses in The United States of America to compete globally. Our country has a skills gap, a skilled workforce shortage, and a student loan debt crisis holding our country back. The skills gap will only increase with the retirement of the Baby Boom generation and rapidly advancing technology. Skills shortages have a widespread impact on manufacturers' abilities to achieve production levels and meet their customer demands (Peckham, 2008). The educational system needs to prepare students for the workforce. It is essential to find a way for school districts and local businesses to help students choose a career path and become qualified for that specific industry. The manufacturing industry has been impacted dramatically by this shortage of skilled workers; however, this problem is widespread across every sector. More than 80 percent of respondents to the Skills Gap Report indicated that they are experiencing a shortage of qualified workers overall (Peckham, 2008). The question is, how can we prepare our students to determine their abilities and learn all of the skills necessary to pursue any career path of their choosing. Quality work-based learning programs may be one piece to the puzzle of providing students with that experience.

Rationale

Student Loans in the United States of America have grown at double the rate it had in previous years and has now reached a new record high of over 1.57 trillion dollars (Stolba, 2021). Helping students decide the career path they want to pursue while they are still in high

school will absolutely help them decide how much student loan assistance they are willing to accrue. Deciding a path will also help students to avoid dropping out of college and accruing debt on a degree they never complete. In the United States, the overall dropout rate for undergraduate college students is 40% (Miller, 2019). Nearly 40% of college graduates end up working jobs that do not require degrees, and even more are working in fields that are not what they went to school for (Miller, 2019). Creating programs that provide students experiences to help them figure out what career path they want to pursue will help prepare them to make financial decisions that will positively impact their futures.

Local communities are always looking to provide a quality education for their youth. That quality education will help open up doors for students to pursue whatever career paths they choose to follow. Getting students to decide to put down roots in their local community is how most small-town communities survive over the years. Work-based learning programs can significantly benefit schools by complementing the academic curriculum with a broader range of services and activities usually not available during the school day (Little, 2011). Local businesses can benefit significantly from working with schools to provide students with real-world work experiences by helping to gain access to recruiting groups of students by improved recruitment, greater productivity, lower turnover, reduced training and supervision cost as the result of better matches between recruits and the needs of businesses (Wates, 2012).

Definitions of Terms

Apprenticeships: formal, sanctioned work experiences of extended duration in which an apprentice learns specific occupational skills related to a standardized trade, such as carpentry,

plumbing, and drafting. Many apprenticeships also include paid components (Luecking, 2009, pg. 13).

Career Exploration: involves visits by youth to workplaces to learn about jobs and the skills required to perform them. Visits and meetings with employers and people in identified occupations outside of the workplace are also types of career exploration activities from which youth can learn about jobs and careers. Typically, such visits are accompanied by discussions with youth about what they saw, heard, and understood (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

Career Technical Education (CTE): is a term applied to schools, institutions, and educational programs that specialize in skilled trades, applied sciences, modern technologies, and career preparation. It was formerly (and is still commonly) called vocational education; however, the term has fallen out of favor with most educators (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

CTSO: A career and technical student organization (CTSO) is an extracurricular group for students in CTE pathways to further their knowledge and skills by participating in activities, events, and competitions (CTSOs, 2020).

Internships: formal arrangements whereby a youth is assigned specific workplace tasks over a predetermined period of time. Internships may be paid or unpaid, depending on the nature of the agreement with the company and the nature of the tasks. Many postsecondary institutions help organize these experiences with local companies as adjuncts to specific degree programs and are alternatively called cooperative education experience, cooperative work, or simply co-ops (Luecking, 2009, pg. 13).

Job Shadowing: extended time, often a full workday or several workdays, spent by a youth in a workplace accompanying an employee in the performance of his or her daily duties.

Work-Based Learning: is a federally-supported program in career and technical education (CTE) that connects workplaces to the classroom to prepare students for real-world careers (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

Paid Employment: may include existing standard jobs in a company or customized work assignments negotiated with an employer. Still, they are always a feature of a wage paid directly to the youth by the employer. Such work may be scheduled during or after the school day. It may be integral to a course of study or simply a separate adjunctive experience (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

Service-Learning: hands-on volunteer service to the community that is integrated with course objectives. Service-learning is a structured process that provides time for reflection on the service experience and demonstration of the skills and knowledge required. Many school districts require service-learning as a graduation requirement, which offers the opportunity to structure them as meaningful work experience (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

Work-Based Learning Experiences: include virtually any activity that puts youth in the workplaces of employers, which offers an opportunity to learn about careers, career preferences, work behaviors, and specific work and occupational skills (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

Work Experience: Can include such sporadic and brief activities as job shadowing, informational interviews, and workplace tours; more intensive activities of various durations

such as workplace mentoring; and other more-protracted experiences, including work sampling, service learning, on-the-job training, internships, apprenticeships, and paid employment (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

Work Sampling: work by a youth that does not materially benefit the employer but allows the youth to spend meaningful time in a work environment to learn aspects of potential job tasks and learn soft skills required in the workplace. (Luecking, 2009, pg. l3).

Statement of the Question

Work-Based Learning is an opportunity for students to learn life skills and experience careers during their educational careers. Students can explore various career pathways and are provided opportunities to interact with their future career paths. This literature review and application project seeks to answer the following research question: What is the impact of schools and local businesses collaborating to help high school students with career readiness? This question allows us to focus on the various aspects of work-based learning and the effect that Work-Based Learning has on the local economy. This thesis will focus on Work-Based Learning opportunities for students to experience paid internships, unpaid internships, and paid work experiences for non-special education students. There are countless studies on Work-Based Learning programs and opportunities for special education students and some are utilized within this thesis as well, but this thesis will mainly focus on Work-Based Learning opportunities and programs for general education students.

Giving young adults work experiences within our community will build relationships and increase the likelihood that those students will choose to live their adult lives within our

community. If we can "grow our own," then what impact will that have on the local economy and society? There was also a focus on the effect those Work-Based Learning experiences have on our students' career planning, potentially saving them time, money, and effort by finding them a career they are passionate about before graduating from our high school. Can we help students to find their career path, the most effective way to achieve their desired career, and prepare them for that field prior to receiving their high school diploma?

In a recent survey, 61% of college graduates said they would change their majors if they could go back (Johnson, 2020). Student preparedness could lead to those students being more successful, lower the dropout rates, help them get and keep a quality job, and possibly help them take out the least amount of student loans as possible. More than half of all American students now have to go into debt to get through college and their average student loan debt is now $37,500 (Kurt, 2021). Contributing to the college loan debt crisis are students that attend college, but never graduate with the degree. These college dropouts experience longer-lasting debt burdens and are four times more likely to default on their loans (Ezarik, 2020). When they do not receive the degree they were pursuing they are unable to get the position they were going after. Paying off the college loans for the degree they never received becomes much more challenging. We need to find a way for students to figure out that pursuing that particular degree is not the correct path for them prior to taking out those student loans in the first place.

Work-based learning opportunities can help students experience those careers prior to starting college and they can help students understand the rigor of the degree needed by interviewing professionals within that field. Those professionals can become mentors for the

students and can even help the student figure out which college program offers the best opportunities.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Work-based learning is a simple yet complicated concept where educators simply want to create experiences for students to explore and experiment with various careers of their interest. There are so many different types of work-based learning experiences that it can be hard to comprehend that all of the following fall under the umbrella of work-based learning. A reliable work-based learning program requires a quality commitment from the school and the businesses within the community. This literature review and application project seeks to answer the following research question: What is the impact of schools and local companies collaborating to help students with career readiness? The literature review is organized into the following categories: School-to-Work and Work-Based Learning, Unpaid Internships, Paid Work-Based Learning Jobs, Risks of Work-Based Learning Opportunities, Benefits of Work-Based Learning Opportunities, Student Benefit, School Benefit, Community Benefit, and Skills Gap.

School-to-Work and Work-Based Learning

The terms School-to-Work and Work-Based Learning are commonly used interchangeably. Experience may include job shadowing, career mentorship, career-related competitions, informational interviews, paid internships, non-paid internships, practicum, service learning, student-led enterprises, simulated workplace experience, paid work experience, non-paid work experience, volunteering, workplace tours/field trips, and youth

apprenticeships (Darche, et al., 2009). The School-to-Work movement started from concerns for our country's health and our citizens' financial well-being. Evidence showed that young adults in the United States were entering the workforce unprepared, making it difficult for our nation to compete internationally (Orton, 2011). There is a wide variety of experiences to help students explore various opportunities within the community to see what they are most interested in pursuing.

CTSOs are Career Technical Student Organizations are career-related competitions that allow students the opportunity to compete by creating real-world situations. Some popular CTSOs are Business Professionals of America: BPA, DECA: emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, finance, hospitality and management, Future Business Leaders of America: FBLA, Family Career and Community Leaders of America: FCCLA, Future Farmers of America: FFA, Future Health Professionals: HOSA, SkillsUSA and Technology Student Association: TSA (CTSOs, 2020). Many of these CTSOs are offered at both the high school and college levels. Many types of experiences help correctly prepare students for the workforce, including unpaid internships, paid work-based learning jobs, career mentorship, job shadowing, and career-related competitions through Career Technical Student Organizations, commonly referred to as CTSOs.

Unpaid Internships and Paid Work-Based Learning Jobs

Experiences in the community where students work without pay allow them to see careers higher than at an entry-level position. According to the *School-to-Work* policy, the whole point of service-learning is to build resume' skills for the younger students who are not yet old

enough to work (Orton, 2011). Internships allow businesses to give back to the community by enabling them to experience their careers and provide training to help them decide which career to pursue. "In internships, human capital explains the investment that businesses make when they provide learning opportunities and resources for scholars to work and gain the technical and employability competencies needed to be abundant in their future careers within an organization" (Chavis, 2017, p. 25). These experiences also expose students to the companies located within their communities and inspire them to live their adult lives near their hometowns.

Paid work experiences at local businesses provide countless lessons for high school students to explore future careers. Orton's (2011) study found the following:

"Certain industry clusters were short-handed, and that my students could perhaps perform entry-level tasks to allow the adult workers to take on the more complex operational functions of the organization. The hope was that my students could then climb their way up through the organization as they matured, gained confidence, and gained whatever new skills they might need and be exposed to." (p. 830).

Several industries benefit from having high school students working for them, especially short-handed industries. In a study conducted by Luecking and Fabian in 2000, over 3,000 students had internship opportunities, and of those students, 2,524 (83%) secured internship positions, 2,119 students, and 84% completed the internship. The significant statistic was that 1,586 of those students, 75%, of the students who completed the internship were offered positions within the original host company (Luecking & Fabian, 2000).

These findings suggest that a structured internship experience is beneficial for students across demographic characteristics, disability factors, and educational placement data. Paid employment during high school is one of the most robust predictors of post-school outcomes (Neubert, 2018). Students can make connections with professionals within their community, and those networking skills can be utilized countless times during their careers. While these internships, whether paid or unpaid, are beneficial, some risks need to be considered and planned.

Risks of Work-Based Learning Opportunities

There are countless benefits to work-based learning, but there are also some risks. "Some have argued that placing students in the workforce, while still attending high school, is a risk that no school district should have to assume, in that it is not practical to ask employers to have their adult workers subjected to fingerprinting laws and background security investigations" (Orton, 2011, p. 832). Schools have to ensure their students' safety during these experiences, so they require the supervising educators to be licensed with a work-based learning coordinator's certificate. The coordinator assumes significant responsibility to ensure that students are safe while completing their experiences. Complex sets of expectations are necessary to ensure the student's safety, and the work-based learning coordinator is expected to establish rules that keep all parties covered. According to Orton's study, teachers are expected to provide leadership in developing the school-to-work program and are also expected to have grant-writing and grant management skills. They are also expected to establish and maintain partnerships within the community so students continue to access these opportunities. Lastly, Orton found that teachers

are expected to have first-hand awareness of every career pathway's current business environment (Orton, 2011). Being up to date with all of the various career pathways and requirements needed to pursue them is an unrealistic expectation to put on educators. Utilizing the knowledge of the community experts in those industries is a much more realistic and effective way to have students learn the required skills and certifications for specific career pathways.

Work-based learning coordinators can also be put in charge of many students working with the community, challenging. According to Epstein, few educators are prepared to work with businesses, agencies, and institutions in their students' communities to promote student success in school and beyond. Without these connections, students are underserved and disconnected from opportunities that enrich their schoolwork and prepare them for the future. (Epstein, 2010).

School personnel and community partners often struggle to find the time to establish and maintain relationships with businesses within the community. It can be challenging to keep businesses wanting to provide these opportunities if the student is not committed to the experience. That negative experience can affect future placement opportunities and limit options (Luecking, 2009). Communicating with mentors from these local businesses is essential to keep the relationship positive. That communication takes a significant amount of time from the school and the local business community to ensure current and future students' quality experiences.

Multiple parties benefit from students collaborating with local community businesses, including the company, the manager giving back as a mentor, the school, the parents, the teacher, the local community, and the student. There is widespread agreement and accumulating

evidence that well-designed programs and practices of the school, family, and community partnerships benefit students, families, and schools (Epstein, 2010).

Student Benefit

"For all youth, with and without disabilities, work experiences have long been shown to improve self-esteem, teach and reinforce basic academic and technical skills, promote an understanding of workplace culture and expectations, and help youth develop a network for future job searches" (Luecking, 2009). For students with disabilities, work experiences provide an opportunity to discover what kind of workplace accommodations may be needed to pursue later career prospects. In The Way to Work, Luecking lists a long list of benefits of work experiences for students and youth who participate in work experiences, including gaining exposure to new experiences that will form career interests, career goals, identify on-the-job support needs, develop employability skills, quality work habits, gain an understanding of employer expectations, link specific classroom instruction with related work expectations and knowledge requirements, develop an understanding of the workplace and the connection between learning and earning, and gain broad work experience as well as experience connected to a specific job function that can add to a work portfolio or resume (Luecking, 2009).

Students learn a variety of life lessons that can be applied to the student's adult working lives. Some of these life lessons include organizational skills, time management, the importance of school work, keeping their education as a whole in mind, improving grades, the importance of attendance, learning multiple career pathways, consider their post-secondary education and training options, what they would like to do for their career and what they do not

want to do for their working lives (Luecking, 2009). Gathering students' information through a work-based learning program can sometimes be tricky as the graduating seniors often move away. Kenny (2016) collected data on work-based learning students by interviewing them one year after graduation to see how well they were prepared for their careers. Forty students were interviewed one-on-one for at least forty-five minutes each. These students who participated in work-based learning programs learned to manage their time, learn responsibilities, grow their social skills, develop their communication skills in the workplace, and foster awareness of the larger world (Kenny, 2016). Students also benefit from reflective activities in their seminar course that was in conjunction with their work placement. The students were taught to learn from their past experiences while on the job, which allowed them to enhance their self-awareness and self-understanding (Kenny, 2016).

Students will identify their skills and interests and then research career fields to find the best matches and finally find employment at the entry-level to gain experiences and insights into the career field. "The students in this study indicated that participation in the School-to-Work reform movement had several influential effects on their attitudes, awareness, and ultimate career choices" (Orton, 2011, p. 973). Students have been known to improve their technical and soft skills needed to succeed in today's workforce. Most students in her study reported that one significant impact that participation in the reform movement had on their own lives was related to their decisions for themselves, their purpose for life, and how they would spend the bulk of their working days (Orton, 2011). With post-secondary options being so expensive and time-consuming, students must have a clear path identified before graduating high school. If they choose their course before leaving high school, they can save time, money,

and effort by not switching majors or doing additional training. Students are on a path for a fulfilled life made possible by their education and how they choose to utilize their education (Machoian, 2011). The goal is for students to experience, explore, fail, learn, and succeed before leaving our supportive high school environment.

School Benefit

Work-based learning provides relevant, real-world experiences that have authentic implications that the classroom cannot offer. Schools are always looking for positive opportunities to expose their students to the real world. Districts can also benefit from the positive press, resulting in additional support from the community through monetary donations, volunteering, or even more beneficial being willing to mentor students based on their career interests. "For educational institutions, they are helping educate students in applicable topics and activities that will enable them to obtain their life goals, including gainful employment and contributing as productive members of society." (Machoian, 2011, p. 83) Producing productive members of society and helping students achieve their goals is ultimately the mission of school districts.

According to a SCANS report from 1992, students expressed that what goes on in the classroom during high school and what happens in the "real world" are very different. The focus groups' participants believe that job skills are learned on the job, hands-on experiences, and extracurricular activities (What work requires of schools: A SCANS report America 2000, 1992, p. 25). Schools can take these results and capitalize by offering students these opportunities within the community as a part of their experience of earning their high school diploma.

Educators have been trying to prepare students for the workforce. Still, because every industry requires such specific skills, it makes it difficult to confidently know that the students are adequately prepared for the career of their choice.

Specialized career training is offered at the high school level. For instance, Alexandria Area High School offers a course that allows students to become certified nursing assistants. Becoming a CNA during high school will enable students to work in the healthcare field before graduating. This has helped the school offer more hands-on learning opportunities for students and help fill vacant jobs within the community to provide care for elderly residents (Alexandria, 2021).

Teachers and counselors who work with students to help find and retain jobs share four personal attributes: principled optimism, cultural competence, business-oriented professionalism, and networking savvy skills. The teachers and counselors have a genuine optimism that enables them to believe in their students' capabilities and feel responsible for empowering them. These professionals will try to do everything in their power to create positive experiences for their students (Tilson, 2013). Teachers and counselors also feel a responsibility to empower these students by having high expectations. This responsibility provides an environment for students to build a positive relationship with their teacher. That rapport helps to have honest conversations about their future career interests and realistic options. Once that rapport is established then students feel more comfortable reaching out to their teacher to seek advice and information about a potential career interest. The teacher then can work with the student to connect them with a professional within their community for the student to ask

questions, job shadow, intern, and even work for.

Students with disabilities are far less likely than their non-disabled peers to finish high school, pursue post-secondary education that will prepare them for qualified jobs and careers, and significantly more likely to be unemployed for much of their adult life (Luecking, 2015). Work-based learning programs provide schools with an opportunity to implement a program that has been proven to help schools facilitate their students with disabilities. Completing a work-based learning program will help students graduate, pursue postsecondary education, and help to become and stay employed for their adult life (Luecking, 2015). This will also help the community by giving these students a purpose and passion for their adult lives and help keep them out of trouble. The school can also benefit by using the workforce to teach these students invaluable skills to count towards their high school diploma.

Community Benefit

Local businesses ultimately are rolling the dice when hiring a young worker or training an unpaid intern. The experience can benefit the student only, be mutually beneficial, or the company could let the student go if they do not meet the business's needs. Community partners also described the positive impact their involvement in the School-to-Work movement had on the respective organizations and industries. One person observed that her organization's hiring processes became better structured and more carefully organized (Orton, 2011). Local businesses are usually very interested in partnering with the school so they can find quality employees. "A key element for the business stake in partnering with education is the proven benefit of obtaining well-trained, enthusiastic, and capable employees." (Machoian, 2011, p. 83).

Both the education and business industries are dependent on each other to be successful, so it is mutually beneficial to accommodate the youth's needs within that community. In 2015, Minnesota's percentage of people without disabilities between the ages of 16-74 who were employed was 81.3%, and the percentage of people with any disability who are employed was 48.2% (Windsor, 2017). While there is room for improvement for increased employment for people with disabilities, both of these percentages were the highest ever recorded in the state of Minnesota and a clear sign that some positive movements had been made to create the increase.

Work-based learning provides an orientation to the adult world for students. It helps facilitate the work-related skills and planning essential for the adaptive transition from student to employee (Phillips, 2002). Allowing students the opportunity to have a real glimpse into what their adult working life could be like enables them to prepare for their careers. This glimpse will enable students to make adjustments or arrangements and will most likely have a lasting impact on their lives.

In a study completed by Luecking & Fabian (2000), 75% of the students who completed paid internships ended up being hired by the original host company. One of the most significant benefits for local companies in these work-based learning programs is to recruit students to be long-term employees at their business. This study was conducted with students with varying levels of disabilities. Depending on the student's abilities, the quality of the work-based learning program, the company's commitment, and the industry demand for quality workers, the percentage of students being hired after their internship could be much higher. There is a significant need for skilled workers within specific industries, and work-based learning

opportunities could help close the gap.

Closing the Skills Gap

The United States continues to have many job openings in construction and manufacturing, but not enough people to fill those jobs. In 2019, the US Department of Labor said that the US economy had 7.6 million unfilled jobs, but only 6.5 million people were looking for work. There are not enough workers, but they do not just need workers. They need skilled workers. Even though most of these career fields fall within the trades industries, students are being pushed to pursue four-year college degrees instead of these trade careers. Students were actively dissuaded from taking any program of study that did not lead to college entrance because of the systemic structures that guided them on the university-bound track (Orton, 2011). Since Orton's study in 2011, there has been a trend away from pushing students to go to university, "Not everybody that I worked with valued an educational path that might lead to stress, burn-out, or a situation in which they were in debt, due to their student loans." There has recently been more support for students to follow their aptitudes and interests without the emphasis of working smarter, not harder.

Caprino (2018) quoted Mike Rowe saying, "Today, "the best path for the most people is the most expensive path for the whole nation, and now, we're looking at 1.5 trillion dollars of student debt. Worse, most people who start college don't even finish. In short, we're lending money we don't have to kids who can't pay it back, educating them for jobs they can no longer find while discouraging them from pursuing good jobs that actually exist" (Caprino, 2018). Mike Rowe is famous for working to close the skills gap in the United States. He has started a

foundation called the Mike Rowe Works Foundation, which offers a work ethic scholarship. They have been focusing on fundraising and friend-raising to help students realize that a four-year degree is not the only option available. High school counselors have been pushing students towards four-year colleges, and they need to help fix the stigma that trade jobs are unable to provide them with the life they are looking for. In reality, there is a significant need for qualified trade school graduates. They can make a great living while working in a job that helps our economy and community thrive (Caprino, 2018).

The skills gap between what employers seek and what scholars or future labor market candidates possess has raised concerns about how the educational system prepares the local high school scholars to become college, career, and life ready and to meet the needs of the labor market (Stone & Lewis, 2012). Schools are trying to create a successful balance between teaching students the core subjects they need to comprehend and preparing them for the workforce. Employability skills are pivotal for teenagers to smoothly transition into their careers, college, and life (Chavis, 2017). More than 80% of the manufacturing field respondents indicated that they are experiencing a shortage of qualified workers (Peckham, 2008). Companies nationwide call for more skilled workers for jobs at all levels because employers say they cannot find qualified workers (Mader, 2019).

There is an indisputable skills gap, an employee shortage, and a student loan debt problem in our country. All three of these issues have a significant impact on our economy. Our school systems need to play an active role in fixing these problems. Our school systems play a vital role in solving this skilled employee shortage and student loan debt problem. Chapter three focuses on how to help educators learn how to create a successful work-based learning

program.

CHAPTER III: APPLICATION MATERIALS

Providing students with opportunities to learn through work-based experiences is a very sought-after topic by business educators. The application materials will focus on two driving factors: a presentation sharing how our district offers work-based learning specific classes to create those meaningful experiences for students, and also how to track student growth and experiences while they are on-site. The first factor is addressed in Appendix A via a presentation for fellow educators and the second factor is addressed in Appendix B and C.

The presentation may be found here:

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1vkGCNool63Af3r7bSwfeXl0aID3Q28DIfDtQvhuHXfo/edit?usp=sharing The entirety of the presentation including a screenshot of each slide is available to see in Appendix A.

The presentation will be able to be shared with colleagues at a professional growth conference or sent digitally. This presentation will allow other educators to see how we provide these experiences through our district's work-based learning program. Educators often ask how our community accomplishes work-based learning experiences—creating a presentation to share with other interested school districts and educators that shares more about our work-based learning program and why it is essential for students. The presentation starts with describing the school and the career academies, along with the work-based learning courses currently offered. Then the presentation covers the importance of work-based learning programs. Evidence showed that young adults in the United States were entering the workforce unprepared, making

it difficult for our nation to compete internationally (Orton, 2011). The presentation then covers the skills that students learn by participating in a quality work-based learning program. Students who participate in a work-based learning program have learned to manage their time, learn responsibilities, grow their social skills, develop workplace communication skills, and foster awareness of the larger world (Kenny, 2016). Then the presentation goes into depth on the specifics of the work-based learning courses offered and how they are run, how they improve those classes, and how social media is used to grow the program. Finally, the Career and Technical Student Organization options were covered so these CTSO competitions can be successfully paired with quality work-based learning programs. Sharing this information at a conference with several educators will help more work-based learning programs be created or refined to reach more students.

Appendix B and Appendix C were created for work-based learning teachers to support their students based on the literature review research. Appendix B is the learning log. Orton (2011) states that learning logs are a vital tool to use along with work-based learning experiences. Students will fill out this "learning log" at the end of each week of their learning experience. A learning log will help all parties involved to know if learning goals are achieved. This process will allow students, parents, coordinators, and mentors to be on the same page about their experiences during their time on-site.

Appendix C is the quarterly evaluation, where the student can self-assess, and the employer or supervisor can provide feedback. Both documents allow the student and mentor to communicate so everyone is on the same page regarding goals, feedback, and outcomes. It is essential for students to self-assess and receive feedback from their employers to see what they

are doing well and where they can improve. With the importance of that feedback in mind, an evaluation form was created that allows students to self-reflect and receive feedback throughout the year.

CHAPTER IV: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter will provide a summary of the literature reviewed in this thesis. The summary will focus on the following research question: What is the impact of schools and local businesses collaborating to help students with career readiness? The chapter will then address the professional applications and limitations of the literature review. It will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Summary of Literature Review

Work-based learning is one of the ways that students are being prepared for the workforce. Whether they are pursuing a technical degree, a bachelor's degree, or going straight into the workforce, students need to be ready for whatever they choose. Based on the studies included in the literature review in chapter two, it is clear that schools offering work-based learning programs are more likely to prepare their students for future careers. Companies nationwide call for more skilled workers for jobs at all levels because employers say they cannot find qualified workers (Mader, 2019). With a high demand for highly skilled workers nationwide, more schools should offer hands-on experiences to prepare their students. Students were being pushed to pursue four-year college degrees instead of trade careers. Students were actively dissuaded from taking any program of study that did not lead to college entrance because of the systemic structures that guided them on the university-bound track (Orton,

2011). Persuading students to pursue four-year degrees eventually caused a significant skills gap problem within our country. The skills gap exists, but there is also a massive student loan crisis that is affecting our nation. According to (Hess, 2020), student debt has increased by more than 100% over the past ten years. Creating hands-on experiences for students can help them to decide which career path is best for them. Determining the right direction for each student can help eliminate unnecessary time, money, and effort. The right track can also help find each student a career that they enjoy and equips them for the lifestyle they look to have.

Professional Application

According to Minnesota State Legislature 120B.125, schools must provide a comprehensive plan to prepare students for a smooth and successful transition to postsecondary education or employment (Minnesota, 2020). This plan must prepare the students with good work habits that can be applied to every industry, such as teamwork, collaboration, creativity, communication, and critical thinking. The schools must also integrate solid academic content into career-focused courses and integrate relevant career-focused experiential learning opportunities. This statue describes work-based learning perfectly and is naturally a perfect fit to help districts follow this statue. The other aspect of this statute is article eight, which states that school districts need to help identify collaborative partnerships between students and local employers that support the student transition to postsecondary education and employment by providing applied and experiential learning opportunities (Minnesota, 2020). Providing work-based learning opportunities is a win-win for districts because they get to check a box by following the state statute and help prepare students for their future plans.

Limitations of the Research

Many other topics have countless studies to choose from; however, work-based learning has limited research available. There was a great deal of quality research, but quite a lot of the research focused on special education students' work-based learning. It was challenging to look through the research to pull the pieces that also included the general education students. Some of the research pulled for this literature review was explicitly focused on special education students; however, the details pulled were still applicable to this review. After thorough research studies were found that focused on general education students, even studies that focused on paid and unpaid internship opportunities.

Implications for Future Research

Tracking students years after being part of a work-based learning program to gather their information is challenging for work-based learning coordinators and school districts. To continue to improve the program, it is essential to know if students followed their career plans, felt well-prepared for their career, thought the work-based learning program benefited them, and what the program could have done differently to improve results. Several studies reached out to former students to get their thoughts, but none of them were after more than a year. It would be interesting once students have completed their postsecondary education and training and have been out in the workforce for at least a year to know if they felt the work-based learning program was effective for them.

Conclusion

After conducting thorough research on work-based learning for general education students, it is easy to conclude that a school district that offers a quality work-based learning program can significantly benefit students, schools, and communities.

Although all three parties benefit from work-based learning, students are the ones that have the most significant benefit of all. They can explore career interests, experience those careers to see what they are actually like, and also create fabulous references within that field that they can reach out to in the future. These experiences can save them time, money, and effort in their futures. The student subjects that participated in the work-based learning program that Machoian conducted made informed vocational and educational choices and subsequently achieved their career goals (2011). When partaking in a hands-on work experience out in the community, students can solidify their future plans or take time to pivot and alter them accordingly.

The school can offer these experiences as a part of graduation requirements or elective options for their students. School districts must adhere to and follow the legislature's state statutes to ensure students are all created and prepared equally and successfully. The state statutes are what help keep each school district accountable. Offering work-based learning opportunities for the students within their district allows schools to provide learning opportunities that educational systems alone cannot provide. Teaming up with local businesses can give the students emphasized activities that help build the relationship between education and the workplace. These real-world applications can help enhance the experience for each

student in a very individualized way. Some of these activities include mentoring, job-shadowing, company tours, career days, mock interviews, portfolio reviews, internships, and work projects (Machoian, 2011). Schools also often benefit from partnering with community members and businesses.

Communities help grow their future workforce skills and create some great public relations opportunities by volunteering their time with these students. Companies develop relationships with these potential prospective employees and can recruit early. Some businesses have hired the student after seeing their skills and work ethic (Machoian, 2011). There have even been some agreements between students and companies where they employ them to work part-time while paying for them to complete the needed degree. These work-based learning experiences can be beneficial to the student, school, and community.

References

Alexandria Area High School College and Career Center. Alexandria Area High School
2021-2022 course catalog. Retrieved from https://www.alexschools.org/Page/6591

Career technical student organization. (2020). Retrieved from
https://www.ctsos.org/about-us/

Caprino, K. (2018). Dirtiest man on TV Mike Rowe takes on America's skills gap problem.
Retrieved from
https://www.forbes.com/sites/kathycaprino/2018/08/30/dirtiest-man-on-tv
mike-rowe-takes-on-americas-skills-gap-problem/#1e2c0b5e6da5

Chavis, D. B. (2017). *A case study of a business-education partnership through
internships* (Ed.D.). Retrieved from
https://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.bethel.ed
u/docview/2023834975?accountid=8593

Darche, S., Nayar, N., & Reeves, K. (2009). *Work-based learning in California.* (Ed.D.).
Retrieved from https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/workbasedlearning.pdf

Epstein, J. L. (2010). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and
improving schools*. Boulder: Taylor & Francis Group. Retrieved from
http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/betheluniversityebooks/detail.action?docID=62509
4

Ezarik, M. (2020). New analysis: Student loan borrowers with no degree. Retrieved from

https://universitybusiness.com/new-analysis-student-loan-borrowers-with-no-degree/

Glassman, J. (2020). Help wanted: Why the US has millions of unfilled jobs.

Retrieved from

https://www.jpmorgan.com/commercial-banking/insights/why-us-has-millions-o

f-unfilled-jobs

Hess, A. J. (2020). U.S. student debt has increased by more than 100% over the past

ten years. Retrieved from

https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/22/us-student-debt-has-increased-by-more-than-

100percent-over-past-10-years.html#:~:text=The%20Federal%20Reserve%20est

imates%20that,when%20compared%20to%20decades%20prior.

Hogue, M. L. (2012). *A case study of perspectives on building school and community

partnerships* Available from ERIC. (1347460529; ED541141). Retrieved from

https://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.bethel.e

du/docview/1347460529?accountid=8593

Johnson, R. (2020). New survey finds most college grads would change majors.

Retrieved from

https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/college-graduate-majors-survey/

Kenny, M. E., Catraio, C., Bempechat, J., Minor, K., Olle, C., Blustein, D. L., & Seltzer, J.

(2016). Preparation for meaningful work and life: Urban high school youth's reflections

on work-based learning 1-year post-graduation. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 286.

Kurt, D. (2021). Student loan debt: 2020 statistics and outlook - the numbers are

    staggering—and still on the rise. Retrieved from

    https://www.investopedia.com/student-loan-debt-2019-statistics-and-outlook-4772007

Little, P. (2011). School-community learning partnerships: Essential to expanded learning

    success. Retrieved from

    https://www.expandinglearning.org/expandingminds/article/school-community-learning-partnerships-essential-expanded-learning-success

Luecking, D. M., & Luecking, R. G. (2015). Translating research into a seamless transition

    model. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, 38* (1), 4-13.

Luecking, R. G., & Fabian, E. S. (2000). Paid internships and employment success for youth

    in transition. *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 23* (2), 205-221.

Luecking, R. G. (2009). The way to work. *How to Facilitate Work Experiences for Youth in*

    Transition. Paul H Brookes: Baltimore, 83-98.

Mader, J. (2019). In one state, students are ditching classrooms for jobs in one state: How

    'work-based learning' is getting Vermont kids ready for careers before they graduate.

    Tech Directions, 78(6), 23. Retrieved from

    https://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=134769842&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Machoian, K. B. (2011). *Effectiveness of business/education partnerships on career paths of*

    students: A Case Study (Ed.D.). Retrieved from

https://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.bethel.edu/docvie
w/898363773?accountid=8593

Miller, C. (2019). College dropout rates. Retrieved from

https://educationdata.org/college-dropout-rates

Minnesota Legislature. (2020). 120b.125 planning for students' successful transition to

postsecondary education and employment; personal learning plans. Retrieved from

https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/120B.125

Neubert, D. A., Luecking, R. G., & Fabian, E. S. (2018). Transition practices of vocational

rehabilitation counselors serving students and youth with disabilities. *Rehabilitation*

Research, Policy, and Education, 32(1), 54-65. doi:10.1891/2168-6653.32.1.54

Orton, M. R. (2011). *School-to-work reform in action: Reflections from the field* (Ed.D.).

Available from Education Database. (866356630). Retrieved from

https://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.bethel.edu/
docview/866356630?accountid=8593

Peckham, S. (2008). NAM and SkillsUSA announce an alliance to prepare more students

for manufacturing career leadership. Retrieved from

https://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.bethel.edu/do
cview/218534764?accountid=8593

Phillips, S.D., Blustein, D. L., Jobin-Davis, K., & White, S.F. (2002). Preparation for the

school-to-work transition: The views of high school students. *Journal of Vocational*

Behavior, 61(2), 202–216. doi:10.1006/jvbe.2001.1853

Stolba, S. (2021). Student loan debt reaches record high as most repayment is paused.

Retrieved from

https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/state-of-student-loan-debt/

Stone, James R. III, Lewis, Morgan V. (2015). *College and career-ready in the 21st century:*

Making high school matter Teachers College Press.

Tilson, G., & Simonsen, M. (2013). The personnel factor: Exploring the personal attributes of

highly successful employment specialists who work with transition-age youth. *Journal of*

Vocational Rehabilitation, 38(2), 125-137.

Wates, J. (2012). Business and schools: Building the world of work together. Retrieved from

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_d

ata/file/306307/business-and-schools-building-the-world-of-work-together.pdf

What work requires of schools: A SCANS report America 2000. (1992). *Economic*

Development Review, *10*(1), 16-19. Retrieved from

https://content.ebscohost.com/ContentServer.asp?T=P&P=AN&K=9603152495&S=R&

D=f5h&EbscoContent=dGJyMNLe80SeqLE4v%2BbwOLCmsEiep7NSs6a4TLaWxWX

S&ContentCustomer=dGJyMPGut1G0p7FLuePfgeyx44Dt6fIA

Why work-based learning? (2021) Retrieved from

https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/center-for-apprenticeship-and-work-based-l

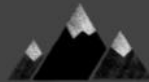earning/benefits-work-based-learning/

Winsor, J., Timmons, J., Butterworth, J., Shepard, J., Landa, C., Smith, F., & Landim, L.

(2017). StateData: The national report on employment services and outcomes. *Boston,*

MA: Institute for Community Inclusion

ACADEMIES

OF ALEXANDRIA

My Future Starts Here

FRESHMAN EXPLORATION

BUSINESS, COMMUNICATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

HEALTH SCIENCES & HUMAN SERVICES

ENGINEERING, MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGIES & NATURAL RESOURCES

Courses Offered @ AAHS

BCE Academy 2020–2021 Business Course Offerings

9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
Business World (9–10)			
Entertainment/Sports Marketing (9–10)			
Microsoft/Google Applications (9–10)			
Intro to Networks (9–12)			
Game Design (9–12)			
	M1: Sales and Advertising (10–12)		
	M2: Digital Marketing & Community Promotions (10–12)		
	Entrepreneurship (10–12)		
	Cardinal Athletic Marketing Productions (10–12)		
	Accounting I (10–12)		
	Accounting II (10–12)		
		Personal Finance (11–12)	
		College Computer Applications (11–12)	
			Business CAPS (12)
			Employment Seminar (12)
			Career Internship (12)

BUSINESS, COMMUNICATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

ALEXANDRIA DECA

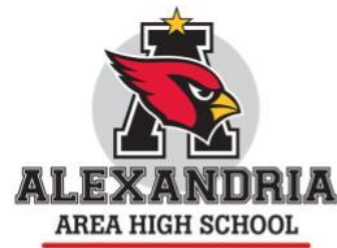## Work-Based Learning Courses

- Employment Seminar = 12th Grade
- Employment Experience = 12th Grade
- Career Internship = 12th Grade

WBL
WORK-BASED LEARNING

Business Courses Taught

- Business World (Intro to business) = 9th - 10th Grades
- Entrepreneurship = 10th - 12th Grades
- Digital Marketing = 10th - 12th Grades
- Personal Finance = 11th & 12th Grades

ALEXANDRIA
AREA HIGH SCHOOL

Why WBL?

- The School-to-Work movement started from concerns for our country's health and our citizens' financial well-being.
- Evidence showed that young adults in the United States were entering the workforce unprepared, making it difficult for our nation to compete internationally (Orton, 2011).
- There is a wide variety of experiences to help students explore various opportunities within the community to see what they are most interested in pursuing.

Employment Seminar

- School to work program
- Block Schedule:
  - 3rd Block
- Year long course
- Seniors Only
- Units Include:
  - Employment Laws
  - Employment Skills
  - Management
  - Career Planning
  - Personal Finance
- Must Pass Seminar to be eligible for Employment Experience credit
 - Students want to leave early for work = Motivation to do well in Seminar class

- Students who participated in work-based learning programs have learned to
  - Manage their time
  - Learn responsibilities
  - Grow their social skills
  - Develop workplace communication skills
  - Foster awareness of the larger world
    - (Kenny, 2016)

- Students benefit from reflective activities:
  - Conjunction with their work placement
  - The students were taught to learn from their past experiences while on the job
    - Allows them to enhance their self-awareness and self-understanding
      - Examples:
        - Journaling/Blogging
        - Projects based on their job/placement
        - (Kenny, 2016)

Employment Experience

- Must take in tandem with Seminar
- Block Schedule:
  - 4th Block = Early Work Release
  - 180 Hours Per Semester
    - Average of 10 Hours a Week
    - Must be an official pay stub
      - Google Sheet to keep track of all hours collected per month
      - View only version linked to daily agenda during Seminar class
  - Weekly Log
  - Quarterly Evaluation
    - Supervisor & Self Reflection
  - Paid Experience - typically entry level job
  - Training Agreement - Paid
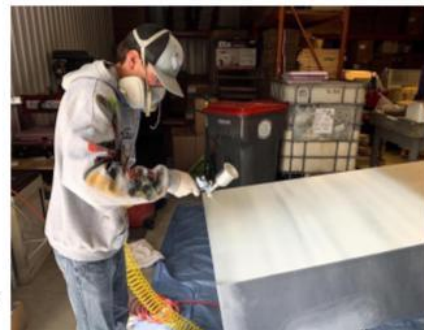
- Several industries benefit from having high school students working for them, especially short-handed industries.
- In a study conducted by Luecking and Fabian in 2000, over 3,000 students had internship opportunities, and of those students, 2,524 (83%) secured internship positions, 2,119 students, and 84%, completed the internship.
- The significant statistic was that 1,586 of those students, 75%, of the students who completed the internship were offered positions within the original host company (Luecking & Fabian, 2000).

BENEFITS OF WORK EXPERIENCES FOR STUDENTS

THE WAY TO WORK - LUECKING 2009

1. DEVELOP QUALITY WORK HABITS
2. FORM CAREER INTERESTS
3. EXPLORE CAREER GOALS
4. DEVELOP EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS
5. GAIN EXPOSURE TO NEW EXPERIENCES
6. FOLLOW EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS
7. UNDERSTAND WORKPLACE NORMS
8. SKILLS TO BUILD A SOLID RESUME
9. LEARNING AND EARNING
10. IDENTIFY ON-THE-JOB SUPPORT NEEDS

Career Internship

- Students spend about 30 days on-site experiencing a career of immense interest
  - Application process
  - Student needs to be past the experimenting stage of their career planning
  - High interest keeps students motivated
- Unpaid Internship Experience
  - Allows students to see the career of their interest at a high level
    - Businesses are not worried about getting their money's worth of a hourly employee
- Block Schedule:
  - 1st & 2nd Block
- Spring Semester of Senior Year
- 5-10 Hours Per Week On-Site
- Every other Friday they have class with me
- These internships often turn into a paid job
- Training Agreement - Unpaid

Career Internship

- A program tailored to fit the student's career interests.
- Units Include:
  - Book Study: 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens
  - Book Study: Oola: Find Balance in an Unbalanced World
  - The importance of utilizing Linkedin
  - 5 Voices Training
  - Blog entries to reflect on time on-site & connect with fellow classmates
  - Professional Interviews
  - Portfolio Website to showcase and house all of their work for this course
  - Final Project based on their experiences on-site
    - Hands on project and/or researched based
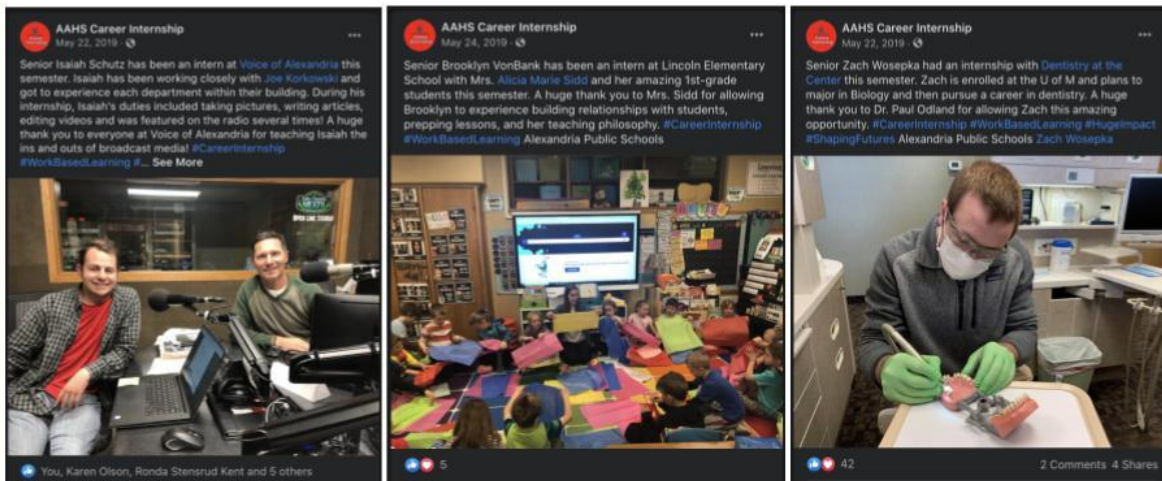   - Example of Portfolio
      - Example of Final Project
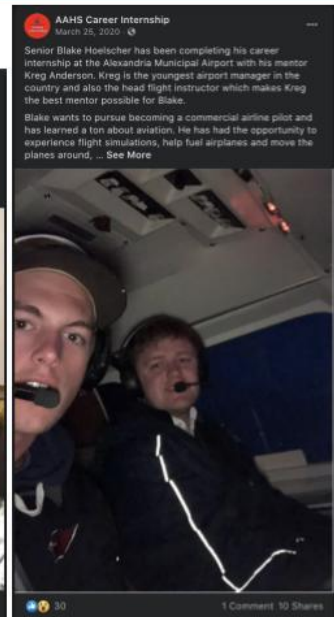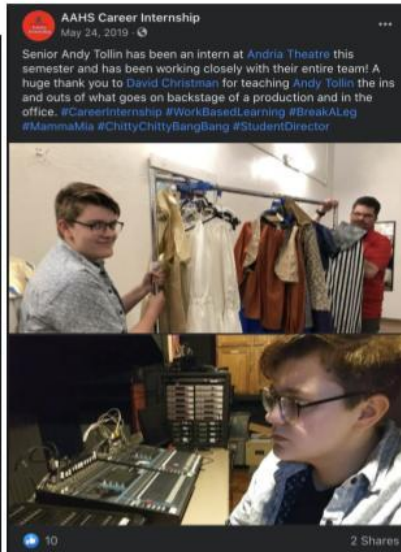
Career Internship

Building a Program

- Highlight students & mentors & local businesses
- Post on Instagram!
  - Share what students are experiencing & Quality PR for businesses

Building a Program

- Need support from community members/businesses
- Need students to sign up

CTSO's

CTSOs are Career Technical Student Organizations are career related competitions that allow students the opportunity to compete by creating real-world situations.

Popular CTSOs:

- Business Professionals of America: BPA,
- DECA: emerging leaders and entrepreneurs in marketing, finance, hospitality and management,
- Future Business Leaders of America: FBLA,
- Family Career and Community Leaders of America: FCCLA,
- Future Farmers of America: FFA,
- Future Health Professionals: HOSA,
- SkillsUSA and Technology Student Association: TSA
  - (CTSOs, 2020).

Many of these CTSOs are offered at both the high school and college levels. Many types of experiences help properly prepare students for the workforce, including unpaid internships, paid work-based learning jobs, career mentorship, job shadowing, and career-related competitions through Career Technical Student Organizations.

Reach Out!

If you have any questions...

Megan Jacob
mjacob@alexschools.org
651-792-5033 - Cellular
Call or Text (Please let me know your name, school, and question)

I'm totally comfortable sharing resources I've made and gathered!

References

Career technical student organization. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.ctsos.org/about-us/

Kenny, M. E., Catraio, C., Bempechat, J., Minor, K., Olle, C., Blustein, D. L., & Seltzer, J. (2016). Preparation for meaningful work and life: Urban high school youth's reflections on work-based learning 1-year post-graduation. Frontiers in Psychology, 7, 286.

Luecking, R. G., & Fabian, E. S. (2000). Paid internships and employment success for youth in transition. Career Development for Exceptional Individuals, 23 (2), 205-221.

Orton, M. R. (2011). School-to-work reform in action: Reflections from the field (Ed.D.). Available from Education Database. (866356630). Retrieved from https://ezproxy.bethel.edu/login?url=https://search-proquestcom.ezproxy.bethel.edu/docview/866356630 ?accountid=8593

Work-Based Learning Experience

Student Name: _____ Date: _____

Company Name: _____ Mentor Name: _____

Week 1 Learning Log

Tasks I completed this week:

Skills I used and how I demonstrated them:

Brief description of what my employer does:

What I found out about health and safety today:

What I did well and am proud of today:

On reflection, I would have done this differently:

Employer/Supervisor comment:

Quarter 1 Evaluation for Employment Experience

Completed by Employment Seminar Student

Company Name: _____ Date: _____

Student's Name: _____

Supervisor's Name: _____ Supervisor Phone Number: _____

Approximate Hours worked in September and October: _____

Are you averaging 10 hours per week?   Circle One: Yes   No

On a scale of 1-4 with 4 being the best, please rate yourself in the following areas while working:

Student	Skills	Supervisor
1 2 3 4	Attendance/Arriving on-time	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Communicating w/supervisor about their schedule	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Respectful to the supervisor and co-workers	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Initiative - Being Proactive w/o direction	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Performs duties as asked	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Attitude	1 2 3 4
1 2 3 4	Receiving Feedback	1 2 3 4

List at least 1 thing you know you could improve on and how you plan to improve. Please be specific and describe it to me.	
Student	**Supervisor**

Student Signature: _____ Date_____