NAVIANCE
BY POWERSCHOOL

Work-Based Learning Made Easy

A Toolkit to Maximize Opportunities in Your Community

Created in partnership with FourPoint Education Partners

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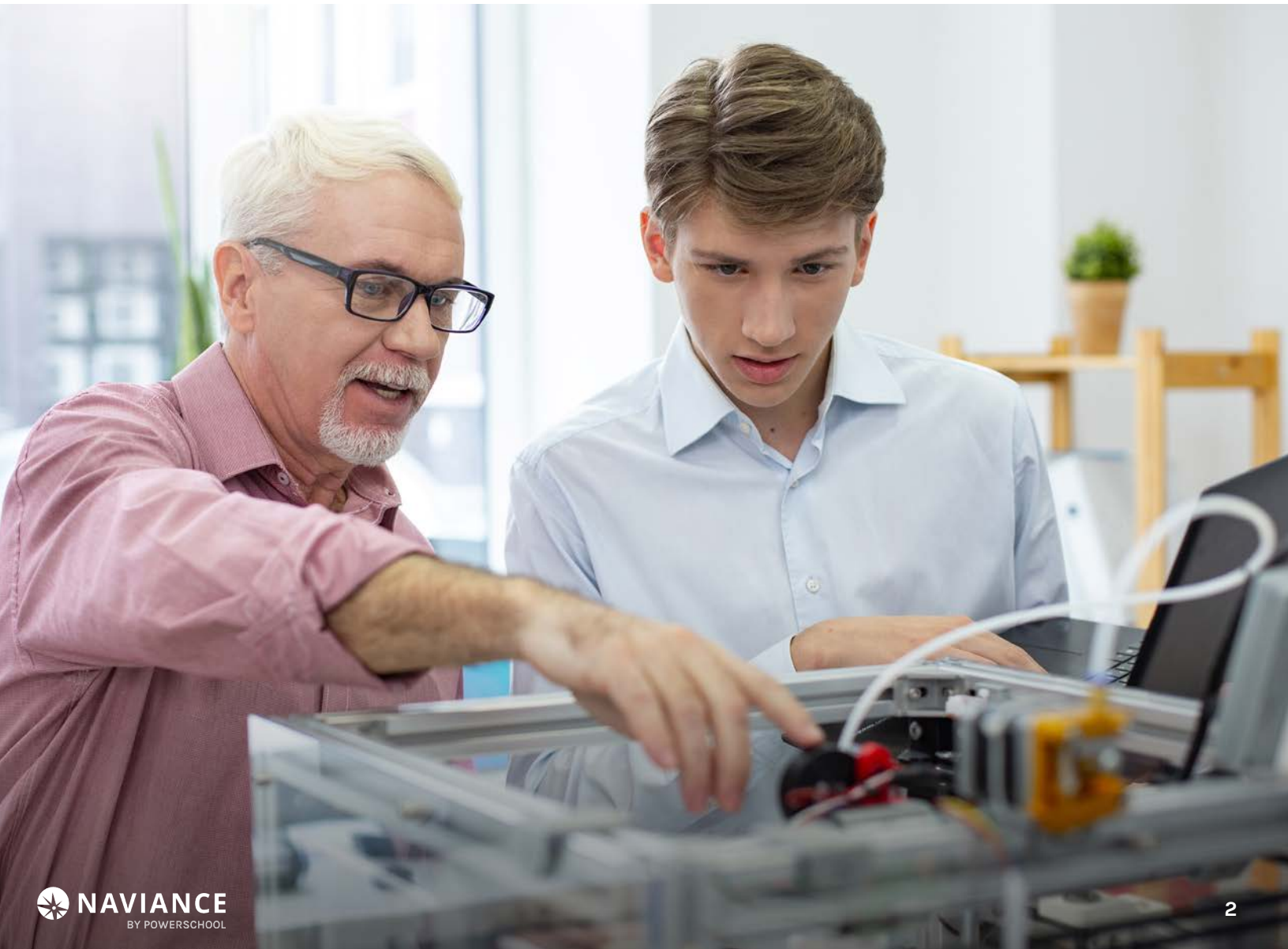


Defining Work-Based Learning (WBL)

The Value and Importance of Career Readiness

According to the latest U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report, there are 9.3 million unfilled jobs in the United States.[1] Many employers across the country report that there is a skills gap for middle skilled jobs, with an insufficient number of applicants having the qualifications, training, or education needed to fill those roles.

Developing a combination of technical, academic, and employability skills is the best way to prepare students for fast-growing and high-earning jobs (Orrell, 2018).

A 2020 report by Georgetown University's Center on Education and the Workforce, "Workplace Basics: The Competencies Employers Want," revealed the five most in-demand competencies across the labor market. **These competencies may be better learned through work-based learning (WBL), rather than in-classroom learning alone**.

- Communication
- Teamwork
- Sales and customer service
- Leadership
- Problem solving and complex thinking

9.3M
unfilled jobs in the U.S[1]

61%
of employers face challenges filling skilled worker vacancies[2]

8M
workers lack necessary credentials[3]

Sources:

1. US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021
2. National Skills Coalition, 2017
3. National Skills Coalition, 2017

What is WBL?

According to Jobs for the Future, WBL is the completion of "meaningful job tasks in a workplace that develop readiness for work, knowledge, and skills that support entry or advancement in a particular career."

WBL: A Continuum

WBL supports a continuum of learning and hands-on skill development experiences, from career exposure and career engagement to real-life work and career experiences.

1. Career Awareness

Grades 4-8

Low-Cost Exploration for all Students in Grades 4-8

- Worksite tours, job shadowing, and information interviews
- Career presentations and connections to classroom learning
- Guest speakers in the classroom

Outcome: Early exposure to high-growth, high-wage career pathways

2. Career Preparation

Grades 9-12

Connecting In-School HS Learning with Work-Based Learning

- Career mentorship
- Career-related dual enrollment
- Youth internship
- Project-based learning with employers
- Summer employment
- Pre-apprenticeship

Outcome: Academic credit and career connection

3. Career Launch

HS + Postsecondary

Meaningful On-the-Job Experience and Aligned Classroom Learning

- Registered apprenticeships
- College internship programs
- Youth registered apprenticeships
- Career training programs

Outcome: Postsecondary credential, paid work experience, career connection

Benefits of WBL for Students

Access to WBL opportunities allows **students to enhance their career research and planning**, ultimately paving the way for them to meet their future career goals.

WBL offers the capability to present the opportunities to help students determine if their interests lead to a **good career fit**.

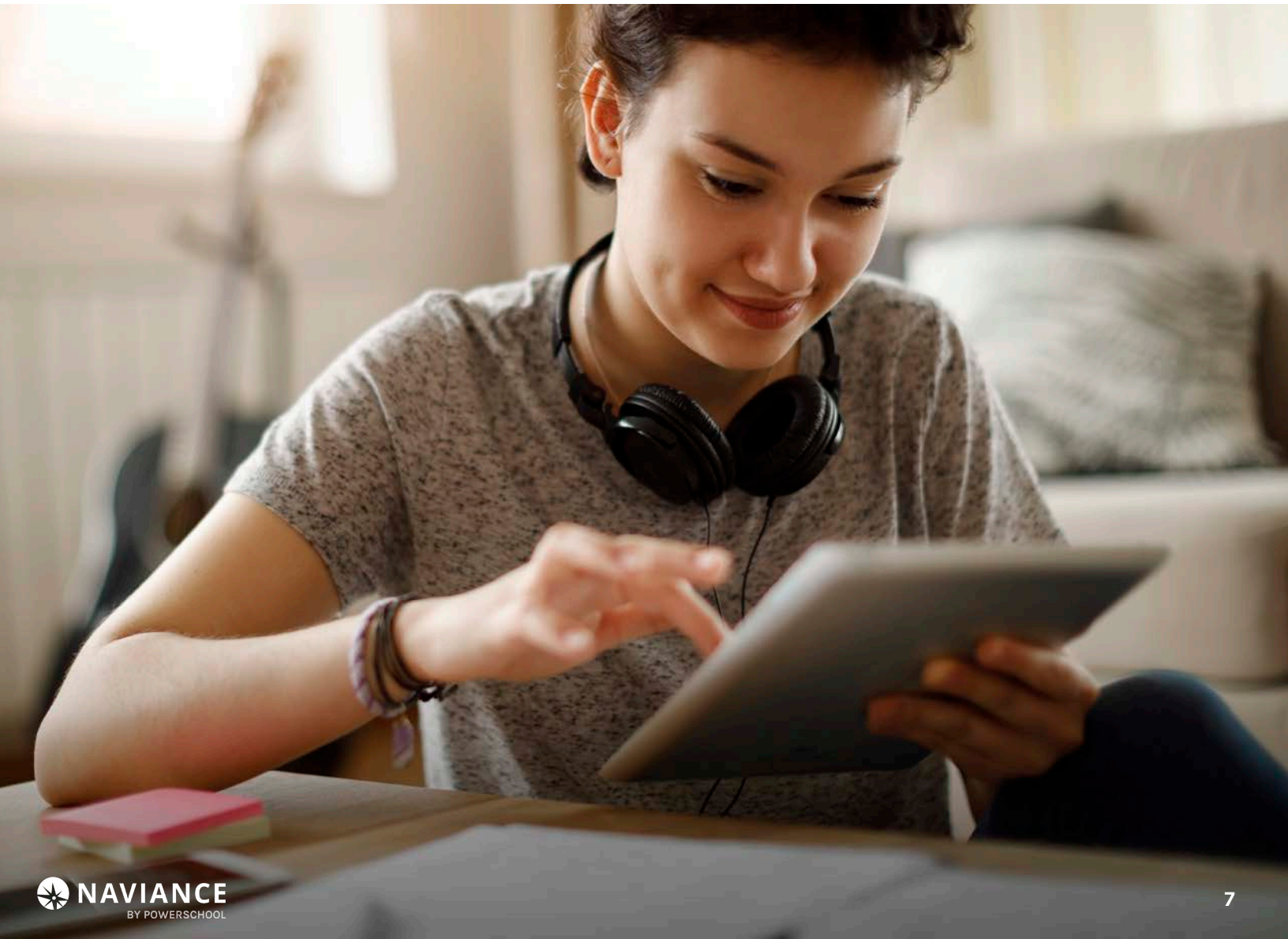
When planned and implemented thoughtfully, WBL delivers compelling, integrated experiences for students to gain early exposure to career pathways, promoting relevant skills development. When provided equitably in a community, WBL also creates a strong, critical bridge to economic self-sufficiency. Students of all backgrounds can get a head start on postsecondary programs, including opportunities to earn college credits and industry certifications before graduation.

An Approach to Closing the Opportunity Gap

As recently as August 2020, the Brookings Institution affirmed, "The labor market doesn't have a 'skills gap'—it has an opportunity gap."

Brookings and others advocate for cultivating and investing in diverse talent to "unleash innovation, economic growth, and community well-being" through **long-term, holistic solutions including:**

- Information about quality jobs and career navigation assistance
- Affordable education and on-the-job learning
- Professional networks and peer support
- A foot in the door to a new field, including first jobs, internships, and apprenticeships
- Equitable hiring, mentoring, and management practices



WBL Can Help Close Equity Gaps

A growing body of research demonstrates the importance of providing career-connected learning experiences by the middle grades for students to develop a positive self-concept of their occupational prospects (Callahan, Ito, Mizuko, Rea, Wortman, & Wortman, 2019).

Marginalized youth often get social cues that engagement in high-value fields is not for youth like them. **Communities can address this barrier by providing students with opportunities to engage in activities** parallel to professional practices in educator-guided projects and hands-on experiences, and exposing adolescents to role models, media, and related content.

Lateefah Durant, who helped build and lead college and career readiness efforts in Prince George's County Public Schools and now works full-time to expand high-quality WBL opportunities for youth as **Vice President of CityWorks DC**, shared her perspective:

"Work-based learning is a critical enabler for students to secure meaningful work that can support a family. Inequitable access to career-building work-based learning is an oft-ignored barrier which prevents young people, especially low-income students of color, from getting key things we know are needed for a more secure economic future: paid work experience, industry-based and postsecondary credentials, and a supportive professional network—all things which their wealthier peers acquire through other means.

Embedding work-based learning into the K-12 curriculum for all students addresses equity challenges and gives all young people access to the experiences and social networks necessary to propel their early career outcomes."

LATEEFAH DURANT | Vice President, CityWorks DC

Win-Win-Win: Building Partnerships with Employers & Postsecondary Training Partners

The Value of WBL: Student Perspectives

"Internships are powerful, and helped me learn that a career in education was my life's direction, not medicine. But I was only able to do that through mentorship and work-based learning. I needed to explore, identify, reflect, and filter through things with another human who was there to support me. With my high school mentor who guided me to look into interning at a school, it would have taken me a lot longer to know that there's power in teaching.

Throughout my high school experience, we were tasked with finding internships during our Independent Learning Time. As I explored different internships, I was oftentimes confused because people in my home didn't do internships. While confused on what internship path to take, I was able to do research and locate a mentor I still talk to today. He helped me go through internship descriptions and answer critical questions about my expectations for specific internships.

Continued on next page >

"Originally my search started with an internship at hospitals and medical facilities because I wanted to be a medical doctor. After experiencing one, I knew that was not for me. A year later, I started an internship at a school, and it was made clear my love and passion were students. So, I continued that internship and later interned at schools and the Mayor's Office of Education. Since that moment, I have started to explore different internships in education because now, after having internships in different fields, including criminal justice, I know working and advocating with students is my life direction."

TAMIR HARPER | Frederick Douglass Distinguished Scholar, American University, Class of 2023, School District of Philadelphia, Class of 2021

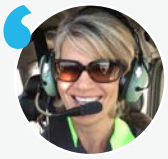
"During my high school years, I've worked with my local middle school to help with teaching and coaching math as an opportunity in work-based learning.

Through this program, I have gained a lot of skills in teaching and mathematics, as well as helping the school team place consistently in the top five on the state level. Almost all of the opportunities which I've had since then are due in part to this experience, and I highly recommend everyone look into a similar program for a subject they are interested in."

PATRICK CORREAL-WINTERS | Centennial High School, Class of 2021, Howard County Public Schools, MD, Intended College Major: Education

The Value of WBL: Educator Perspectives

"Providing internships is one of the most important things you can do for students. There is no better motivator for high school students."



THERESE TIPTON | Principal, Raisbeck Aviation High School in Highline Public Schools (WA) where students have the opportunity to participate in internships with Boeing and other valued employers

"Our community knows that the better educated our students are, the more we can grow as a community. So work-based learning partnerships are very important to help our students understand the opportunities that are available to them."

DIANA L. GREENE | Superintendent, Duval County Public Schools (FL)

"Students who do internships not only get real-world experience, they also see the real-world connections between their career education and the classroom work that may not be obviously related to their career choices. As an ELA teacher, I see firsthand that my students who have real-world experience through internships understand the value of the writing and analytical skills that they gain in their English courses."

JENNIFER WINTERS | Teacher, Carver Vocational-Technical High School (MD)

The Value of WBL: Employer Perspectives

WBL is also a win for employers. **Nancy Fishman, Co-Global Director of Ready Nation,** tells us business leaders are united in their concerns regarding their future workforce. She says, "Business and industry face a looming gap between available positions and workers with the skills to fill those positions. Partnerships between businesses and education are an important factor in building a strong workforce."

In responding to the notion of the "Return on Investment" (ROI) for businesses thinking about partnering with schools to provide WBL, **Sarah Kapellusch, Manager of Business Partnerships and Development at Gateway Technical College (WI)** says, "I call it Return on Relationship. Businesses must understand that having youth in their talent pipeline process is a must and will not drop off. Take time to help educate teachers on your needs and they will give back to you a career- or college-ready individual."

Benefits for Employers

- Develops diverse, robust talent pipeline
- Reduces hiring costs
- Increases retention through strong student connections

Effective WBL Practices

WBL Requires Effective Coordination with Partners

Career readiness is a primary task for school counselors, but it is difficult to provide individualized instruction due to high student-to-counselor ratios (ASCA, 2020).

However, by aligning existing assets and efforts, communities can establish broader and more equitable access to WBL opportunities, so that every young adult will have multiple pathways to economic self-sufficiency, fulfillment, and access to meaningful career opportunities leading to improved outcomes.

Successful WBL coordination leverages the expertise of employers, postsecondary education, and training providers, including out-of-school time programs, as well as teachers and other educators to ensure programming connects learning across schools and the community.

Keys to Effective Internal (Cross-Departmental) Collaboration

Coordination between staff members focused on college and career readiness (e.g., school counseling and CTE)

- Collaborate to arrive at shared definitions of WBL opportunities, processes, and measures (e.g., credit earning options and requirements)
- Team up to maximize partnership opportunities and resources

Coordination between CCR staff and teachers

- Create communication materials to make it easy for teachers to promote WBL opportunities

Coordination with transition coordinators supporting students with disabilities

- Special education departments have a lot of expertise

Collaboration with External Partners

- Employers often field WBL requests from a variety of school and district staff. Internal collaboration should streamline this outreach to make it easier for external partners to understand WBL partnership opportunities and processes
- Create a master list of WBL partners, including those providing apprenticeships and internships for CTE programs, transition programming for students with disabilities, and any other school-led work-based learning
- Add a prospective partner list, including any CTE program advisors not yet providing WBL, the local chamber of commerce and any other workforce development groups, professional associations, or employer partners, particularly those in the region's high-growth sectors
- Make an accessible WBL partnership webpage that provides simple instructions on how to provide a WBL opportunity with answers to FAQs

Key Attributes of a Thriving WBL Community

After a decade of developing them across the state, Colorado has found that thriving WBL communities share the following elements.

- **Leadership:** A partner has devoted a full or partial FTE to manage the initiative and guide the work of the leadership team and committees
- **Needs Analysis:** Data analysts are identified and work together across partners to regularly review relevant information
- **Asset Mapping:** Assets are documented and made public and updated on a regular basis
- **Stakeholders:** Capacity building activities take place regularly, and a governance structure is in place for decision making
- **Resources:** A sustainable business model is in place that supports a lead agency to drive this work forward on an ongoing basis
- **Communications:** A strategic communications plan is in place that keeps all partners informed on a regular basis, as well as sharing stories to generate further involvement
- **Evaluation & Continuous Improvement:** Indicators are regularly reviewed, and progress is reported publicly—surveys are conducted regularly to identify improvement opportunities

	Exploring	Emerging	Demonstrating	Thriving
Leadership	An individual or an entity is a champion of this effort	A leadership team has been established with representation from multiple partners	A leadership team meets regularly, and committees are in place as needed for specific projects	A partner has devoted a full or partial FTE to manage the initiative and guide the work of the leadership team and communities
Needs Analysis	Labor market information and needs of businesses has not been analyzed or reviewed	A leadership team meets regularly, and committees are in place as needed for specific projects	Full analysis of data and needs has been conducted and the right solution has been picked for the identified problem	Data analysts are identified and work together across partners to regularly review relevant information
Asset Mapping	Community assets or programs are understood based only on past experiences	A partner has devoted a full or partial FTE to manage the initiative and guide the work of the leadership team and communities	Assets and resources of all community stakeholders are documented and used in decision making and strategic planning	Assets are documented and made public and updated on a regular basis
Stakeholders	At least two to three key stakeholder groups are at the table and ready to engage in this project. The three stakeholder groups are Business, Education, and Workforce/Community.	Labor market information and other data sources are identified and used to inform the direction of the initiative	Partners from all three stakeholder groups actively engage in conversations and initiatives together. Work is aligned and duplication of services is not occurring.	Capacity-building activities take place regularly, and a governance structure is in place for decision making
Resources	Financial resources to support the work are unknown	Full analysis of data and needs has been conducted and the right solution has been picked for the identified problem	Financial resources are contributed by multiple partners as they are available. A strategy is in place to coordinate funding opportunities when they arise.	A sustainable business model is in place that supports a lead agency to drive this work forward on an ongoing basis
Communications	The champion communicates as needed with engaged stakeholders	Data analysts are identified and work together across partners to regularly review relevant information	A communications lead is identified and develops messaging that informs stakeholders and expands the partnership	A strategic communications plan is in place that keeps all partners informed on a regular basis, as well as sharing stories to generate further involvement
Evaluate and Continue Improvement	Process outcomes are defined and considered to be successful	Assets and resources of engaged stakeholders are documented and used in decision making	Multiple outcomes are identified, and indicators are tracked and reported regularly	Indicators are regularly reviewed, and progress is reported publicly. Surveys are conducted regularly to identify improvement opportunities.

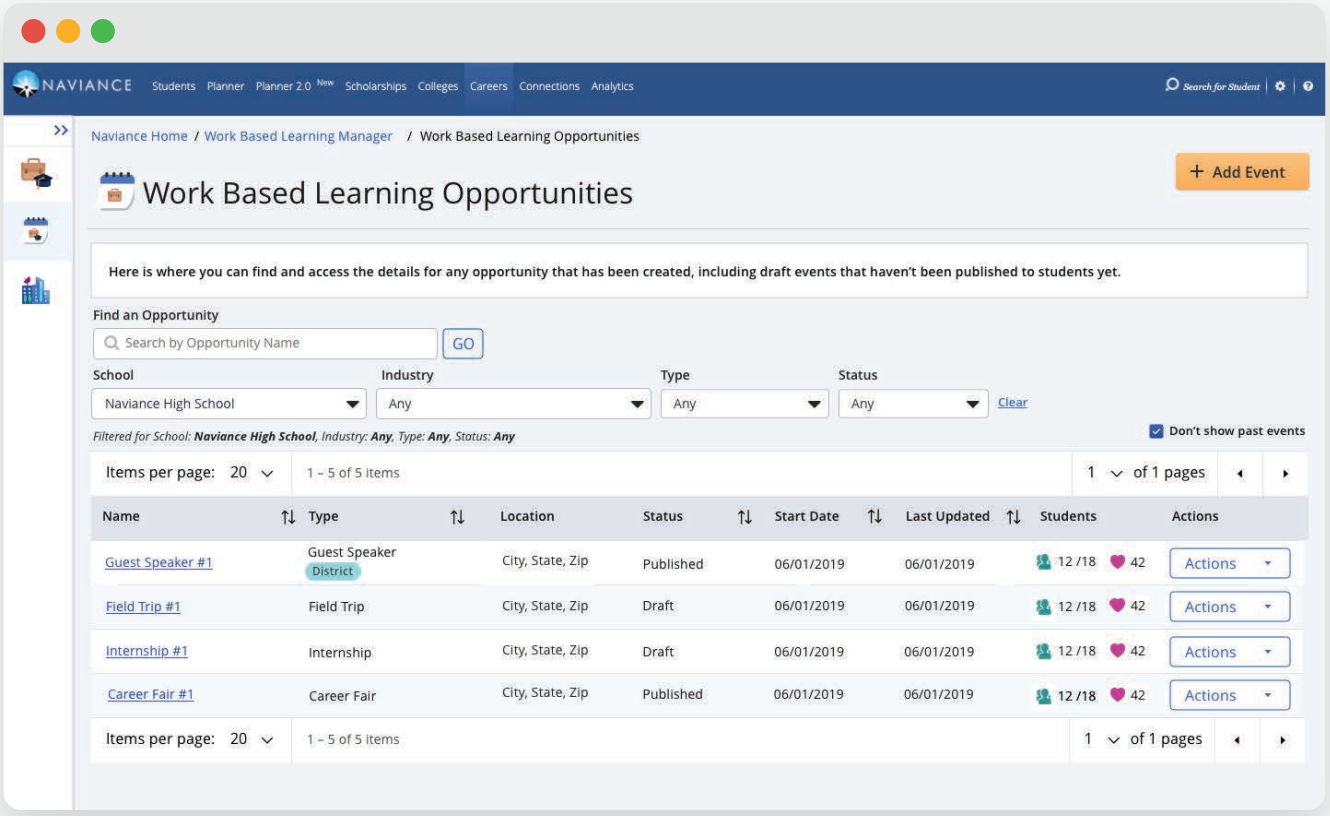
Resources to Facilitate WBL Partnerships

WBL Opportunities in Naviance by PowerSchool

Staff View:

Naviance WBL enables schools and districts to provide access to work-based learning opportunities for students to participate in.

School and district staff have visibility into the career paths students are interested in earlier, allowing them to provide the right activities and supports needed to best help students achieve their postsecondary goals. Districts can publish WBL opportunities district wide or for specific schools.

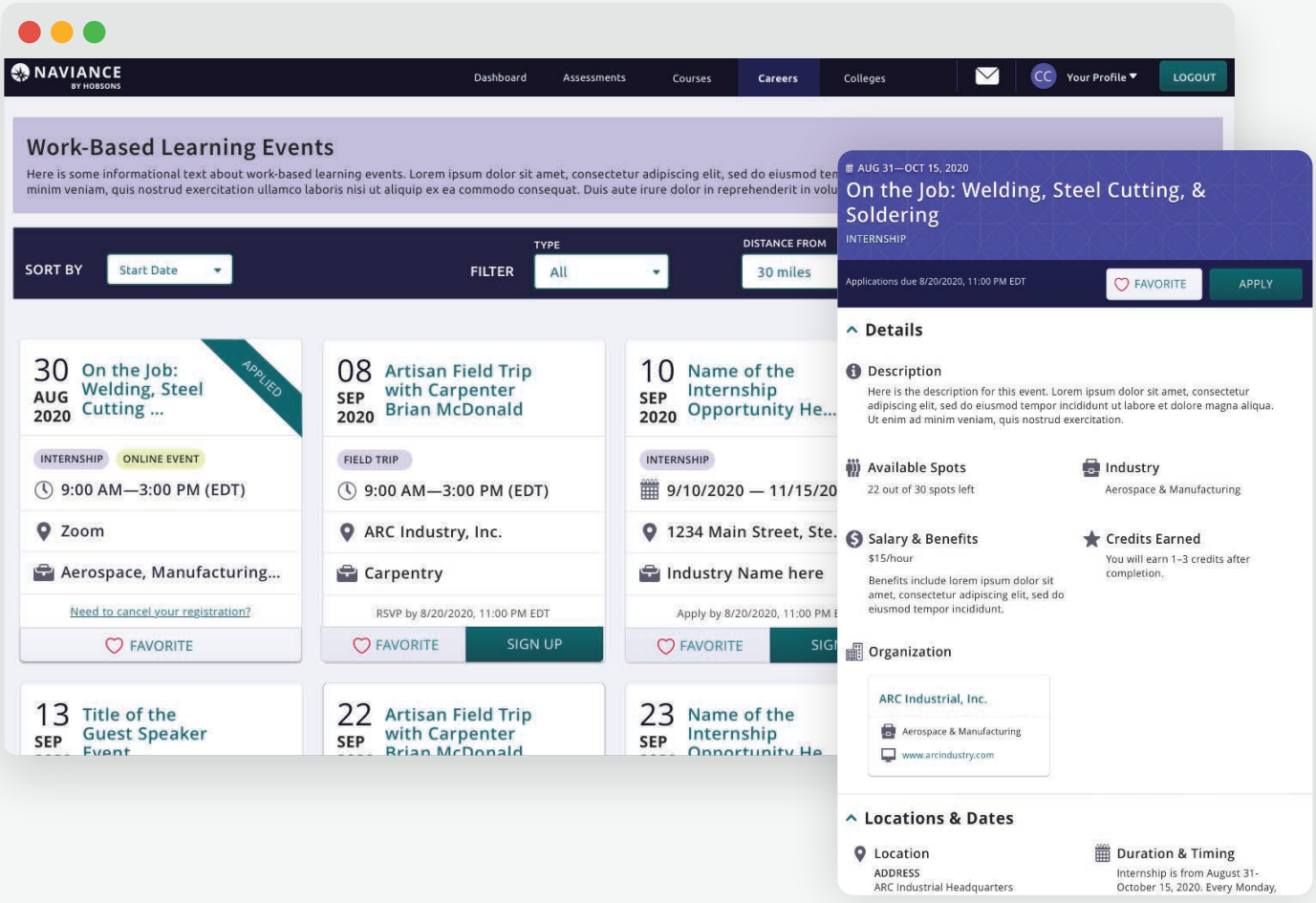


Student View:

Once entered, students will be able to view, act on, and track local WBL opportunities they participate in, such as internships, externships, job shadows, career fairs, field trips, and guest speakers.

Students will see additional information when they click into an opportunity. For example, in an internship, they will see details about the organization, the application process, if it's paid or unpaid, etc.

They will see how opportunities connect to career clusters and career pathways so they have a holistic view of how their interests can align with their future careers.



“Naviance enables our district to put all college and career readiness activities into one spot. Students are not having to go to different platforms anymore. They’re able to do everything in Naviance.

Part of my role at the district is to support CTE work. A huge component is having work-based learning opportunities in our CTE courses. Being able to provide work-based learning opportunities in one centralized location across the district will increase access for all our students to enhance their career exploration and planning.

With the new Naviance Work-Based Learning, I believe there will be more collaborations across our CTE and counseling departments. There is also an opportunity to engage teachers to bring career readiness into the classrooms.”

ERIN LIPPERT | K12 Pathway Coordinator, Covina-Valley Unified School District (CA)

Make It Easy

Schools and districts can make it easier for employers to serve as WBL partners by adapting this template for employers to submit the information needed for WBL opportunities to be shared with students, via Naviance's or your own platform.

You can use this template to start a shared document (using your school or district document sharing platform—e.g., Google Sheets, Google Docs) to develop a collective list of current and prospective WBL partners and opportunities.

Download the Template for WBL Opportunities >

Schools and Districts with Exemplar Models of WBL

Let's learn from each other. There are already many schools and districts across the country who have successful WBL programs. These schools and districts have incorporated clear communication materials for students, families, and employers. Schools and districts who have effective models you can learn from include:

- Broward County Public Schools
- Denver Public Schools
- Miami-Dade County
- Raisbeck Aviation High School (Highline Public Schools)

Additional Helpful Resources

Developing New and Innovative Approaches to Support Career Readiness (8-page report with highlights from leading superintendents, District Administration, January/February 2021)

Community in Education: Bringing Businesses and Schools Together (8-page report from the Learning First Alliance, 2017)

Expanding High-Quality Work-Based Learning (policy brief from the Education Commission of the States, August 2020)

Guides, frameworks, and other resources for work-based learning, sector partnerships, and business engagement, from the Colorado Workforce Development Council

Making Work-Based Learning Work (report from Jobs for the Future, July 2016)

Unpacking the Work of Work-Based Learning (report from the Aspen Institute Economic Opportunities Program, February 2021)

Sources

Orrell (2018). STEM without fruit: How noncognitive skills improve workforce outcomes, American Enterprise Institute.

ASCA (2020) American School Counselor Association. Retrieved from: https://www.schoolcounselor.org/.

Callahan, Ito, Mizuko, Rea, Wortman, & Wortman (2019). Influence on Occupational Identity.

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About Naviance

Naviance is the leading college, career, and life readiness (CCLR) platform that enables students to discover their strengths and interests, build critical social and emotional skills, create actionable goals, and find their best-fit path after high school. Naviance helps ensure that all paths students take after high school lead to fulfilling and meaningful careers.

PowerSchool
Powering Brighter Futures

At PowerSchool, we believe in the simple truth that every student deserves the best opportunities in life. That's why our mission is to power the education ecosystem with unified technology that helps educators and students realize their potential, in their way. From the office to the classroom to the home, PowerSchool helps schools and districts efficiently manage instruction, learning, grading, attendance, assessment, analytics, state reporting, special education, student registration, talent, finance, and HR. Today, we're proud to be the leading provider of K-12 education application technology supporting over 45 million students in over 90 countries.

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