

# Work-and-Learn Program



## Creating a Definition and Crafting a Pipeline

Work-and-Learn Programs have been identified as a reliable asset in workforce development. This paper provides a **working definition** of *High Quality Work-and-Learn Programs*, including insight on how to establish a Work-and-Learn Program as an educator or as an employer. It addresses feedback from surveys, focus groups, and interviews with educators, employers, workforce associates, and student interns, regarding how to address common hindrances and ascertain what is essential to ascertain a high quality work-and-learn experience in Northwest Indiana (NWI). Our data is solely sourced from the Northwest Indiana region but its findings are relevant beyond the region. Northwest Indiana includes the seven counties of Jasper, Lake, La Porte, Newton, Porter, Pulaski and Starke.

**CONCEPT OF WORK-AND-LEARN PROGRAMS** Educators and employers offering students the opportunity to format their education and work experience simultaneously in order to meet employer entry level standards. *High Quality*: To exceed basic qualifications and maintain the upper echelon of identified standards.

### Problem/Challenges

Educators can help transform any employment into a Work-and-Learn Program (WLP) by identifying specific learning outcomes and compensating a student through educational credits for skills acquired and time spent in the workplace. Furthermore, educators can help students build on their learning experiences by highlighting areas for growth in their education.

At the post-secondary level, Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs, colleges/universities, and apprenticeship programs have long since facilitated WLP engagement by:

⇒Blocking out specific points in educational time table to fulfill a WLP

⇒Establishing connections with employers

⇒Identifying coursework to help students fill knowledge gaps and improve skill sets

Northwest Indiana's economic future is tied directly to our ability to accelerate educational attainment levels and create a new culture of education in the region.

Our partners in education, economic development, workforce development, and government are embarking on a 10-year mission of collaboration to achieve our "60% by 2025" goal which requires us to move from the current 37% of adults with higher education credentials to the 60% level projected to be needed by our employers, specifically in the Science Technology Engineering Mathematics (STEM) field.

(<http://www.readynwi.com/Reports>).

Based on our research and feedback from content contributors, we identified 13 Work-and-Learn Criteria that are consistently mentioned as criteria leading to a high quality Work and Learn experience.

### High Quality Work-and-Learn Criteria

1. Placement is tailored to meet student's needs & career focus
2. Open communication between employer, student, and school with expectations being managed
3. Mentored
4. Specific learning outcomes driven by student's skill development
5. Supervised
6. Exposure to variety of workplace sectors
7. Commitment to orientation and on-boarding
8. Student is compensated (wage, credit or credential)
9. Providing a structure that allows completion of a project
10. Student receives open and honest feedback
11. Support services are provided to ensure participation and completion of WLP
12. Assist students in collecting documentation of their learning for their portfolio
13. Student is provided an option to work remotely (not at employer site)

## Where do we start?

Work-and-Learn Programs can be complicated, interwoven systems with many entities involved, or they can be facilitated between just a few people. We have identified **four steps** before employment that allow students to get the exposure and training they need. The culmination point before employment should result in a [High Quality Work-and-Learn](#) experience.

*The single greatest hindrance to a WLP in both workplaces and educational settings is not having a person designated responsible for facilitation.* From our survey responses, focus groups, and individual interviews this was a consistent concern.

With an appointed person to support the education and another to represent an employer, we identify :

[Step 1]

**J**ob Shadowing and Workplace Tours as the base tier of WLPs. Job shadows and workplace tours allow for the maximum number of students exposed to the workplace with the minimum required engagement for educators and employers. Utilizing the assets in our region this past year, we were able to conduct 13 workplace tours. Nine schools and 13 workplaces or companies created a base layer of exposure to 624 students. These combinations of entry level engagement created the spring board to the second tier of WLPs.

Research does not indicate how many job shadows or workplace tours it takes for a student to identify a workplace for the next step, and some may choose to move to step two without actually taking part of a workplace tour or job shadow.

*Please refer to the Asset/Resource Map for guidance on tours and/or job shadows.*

[Step 2]

**T**raining presents itself as the next step for WLPs. If a result of job exploration includes interest in manufacturing, it would be logical for educators to encourage Manufacturing Technology classes (known by many as “shop class”), MCAD, or Microsoft Suite. MS Suite is also applicable for Liberal Arts.

Work Ethic certificates such as the ones offered by community assets, state level, and nationally are becoming high de-

mand for both Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) students and Liberal Arts students. All can benefit from gaining specialized training. This is also an area for engagement with employers, as employers could enter classrooms offering quick tutorials.

Training can be in longer forms, such as OSHA certification. This is another step where we borrow from our WLPs forefathers like CTE and apprenticeship programs; they have pioneered the outlining of technical skills needed to meet employers’ entry level standards.

[Step 3]

**P**roject-Based WLP, which have also been considered internships, but have specific parameters regarding a student’s scope of involvement. While some students may be prepared to go from skills training to an internship, others could benefit from a project based WLP. High-intensity, short duration projects, allow for students to hone their skills without committing to an elongated internship.

Many employers do not differentiate between project based WLPs and internships. The grant made possible by the Works Council supported two project-based internships. One for a secondary student, and another for a post secondary student. The two are not counted in the eight more high quality Work-and-Learn Placements that had been facilitated through this grant.

[Step 4]

**A**pprenticeships provide the highest engagement and are considered the oldest forms of WLPs; similar to apprenticeships are internships. Many industries that required highly skilled labor have perfected this method and included components such as: financial compensation, educational compensation, or both; enabling students to do career relevant work while still being mentored, clearly identifiable skills attainment, a comprehensive orientation to the organization and the position, as well as open communication and regular feedback.

Internships take Project-Based WLPs to the next step by introducing students to a variety of workplace scenarios, with an increase in the expectations of workplace ethics, and an introduction to a variety of workplace sectors. Ideally, Internships transition into employment.

This grant enabled us to match eight of the ten students with employers to begin an introduction to the workplace in this High Quality structured WLP.

Half of those were college students that feasibly can transition into permanent fulltime work.

Using apprenticeship programs as a rubric and once a company identifies what the necessary incoming qualifications are of an entry level employee, it becomes logically persuasive to establish a WLP as early as possible

### More about our findings

In reaching out to nearly 113 employers through surveys, focus groups and interviews, 32% responded. Out of those respondents, nearly half have established programs.

Employers benefit from their increased engagement because WLPs help to garner interest in both industry and employment. Employers have an opportunity to showcase themselves while also trialing an employee.

Many employers point to assets such as **IndianalIntern.net** to locate interested students, gather information about state funds available to support their programs, and connect with schools. Educators remark that IndianalIntern.net is where they refer students for locating WLPs.

*Please refer to the Asset/Resource Map for more information*

We surveyed 56 Secondary, Post-Secondary, Career & Technical Education, and Apprenticeship Programs, resulting in a response rate of 81 percent.

Of responding schools, we found 55 percent had some form of WLP. This does not account for the six percent of schools whose students are coordinated through their local CTE program. Another 13 percent were unsure if their school had a current program available for students to take part in.



Many had clear ideas of necessary components for them to continue or establish a program. The ten top criteria were consistently cited by educators, and the remaining three were considered additional details that really count.

For educators of students outside metropolitan areas, transportation can be a large hurdle to overcome. Less than three percent of schools offer situational support such as:

Remote work, which gives students additional flexibility and offers extra responsibilities to the educator to provide the resources (eg., space, materials, and supervision) to support the student worker.

If schools are able to offer students additional resources, they may also consider helping students procure items for their portfolio, as many future employers will be interested in samples of their work. When combined with these elements of support, help applying for employment becomes the final touch to a program. According to our survey results, students will find less than three percent of schools offer the last three criteria.

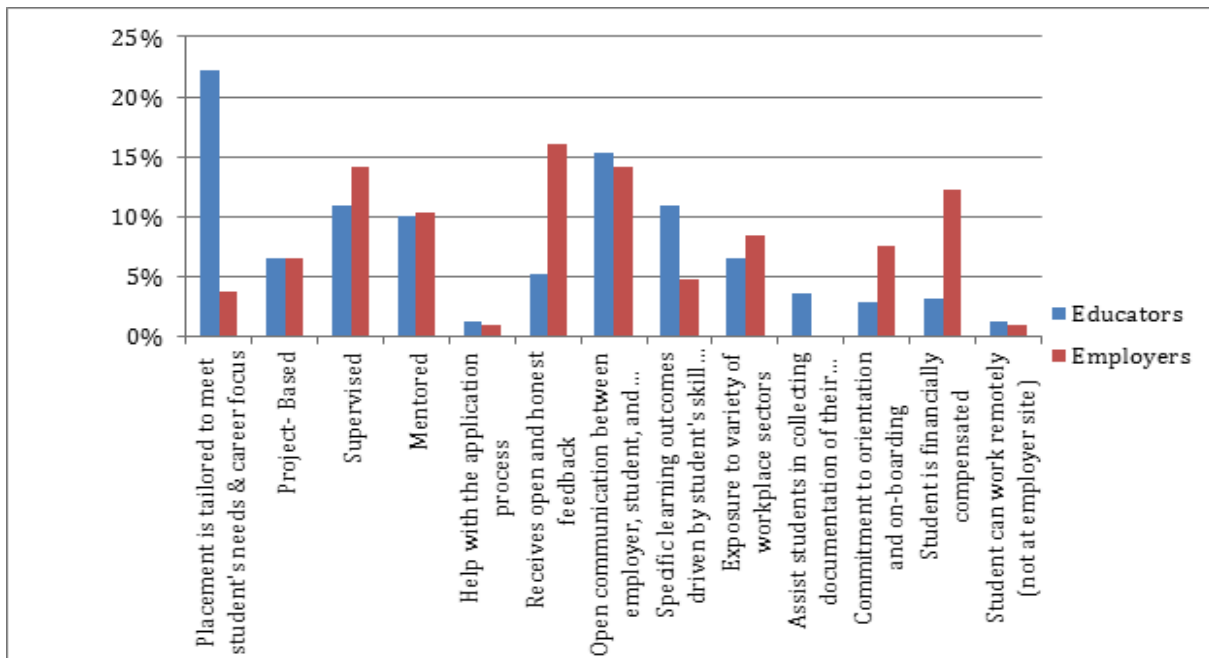
### WLP BENEFITS TO EMPLOYERS

- Finding future employees
- Test drive the talent
- Increased productivity
- Increased employee retention rate
- Low cost labor
- Free exposure
- Community engagement

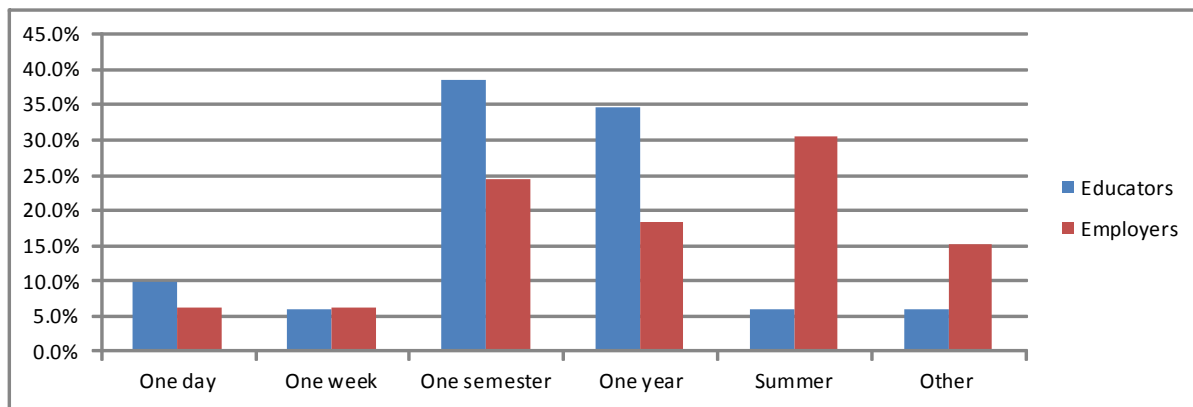
### WLP BENEFITS TO EDUCATORS

- Increased retention rates at schools
- Community building
- Individualized education
- Student exposure to various industry sectors

## Educators' Expectations VS Employers Offerings



## Preferences on Work-and-Learn Program Duration



**Significant gaps exist between educators and employers which can hinder our ability to implement broad scale WLPs. A pilot program would need to be implemented which included specific criteria and instruction for all involved. The employment environment is vastly different from that in education. Both sides need to understand the priorities of the other and remember the goal is to prepare the student for the realities of the work environment.**

The Indiana **Works Councils** are charged with facilitating sector partnerships within their region and enhancing the career readiness of Hoosier adults and high school students through the development and support of innovative career and technical education (CTE) curricula. This white paper was written and prepared by the Center of Workforce Innovations on behalf of the Region 1 (Northwest Indiana) Works Council.

