

Issue BRIEF

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Why are Work-Based Learning Experiences Valuable?

The Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (DVR's) Linking Learning to Careers (LLC) program provides enhanced work-based learning experiences to help high school students with disabilities as they make the transition to careers or postsecondary education. This brief describes these work-based learning experiences, which are the core component of LLC's enhanced services.

Vermont's DVR received a five-year grant from the Rehabilitation Services Administration to demonstrate evidence-based practices for providing high school students with work-based learning experiences in integrated settings. See the issue brief "[Roadmap for Change—Linking Learning to Careers Program](#)" for more information about the specific services provided through LLC.

WHY IS WORK-BASED LEARNING VALUABLE?

Work-based learning experiences help students develop important soft skills, expand their professional networks, and better assess their own capacity for and interest in a given career.^{1,2} Students also learn to identify what supports they might need to succeed in a workplace.³ Through these experiences, students prepare for their transitions from school to adulthood and become better able to make informed decisions about integrated, competitive employment that lines up with their interests and goals. Work-based learning experiences are intended to offer specific skills or knowledge that support the goals of each student. Each work-based learning experience is guided by a set of clear roles and responsibilities for the student, employer, and work-based learning coordinator.⁴

HOW ARE WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCES ALIGNED WITH STUDENT GOALS?

Students work with their career consultants to develop LLC plans. The LLC plan is a living document that records the student's aspirations, values, skills, and interests. The student and career consultant then use that information to define specific short- and long-term goals and to determine which LLC activities and services

will best enable the student to reach those goals. A student should choose the work-based learning experiences that will help him or her achieve the goals in the LLC plan.

WHAT IS AN LLC WORK-BASED LEARNING EXPERIENCE?

Students in LLC can take part in several work-based learning experiences. They can expect to participate in at least one job-shadowing experience, one unpaid internship, and one employer-paid job. These experiences may occur in any order, but the duration and degree of student responsibility logically progresses from job shadowing to unpaid internship to paid job.

Youth employment specialists work with employers to arrange work-based learning experiences for each student. For job shadowing, the youth employment specialist coordinates a training agreement. For unpaid internships and paid jobs, a training plan defines the roles and responsibilities of the employer, the student, and the youth employment specialist; the benefits to each; the skills to be acquired during the experience; and the timeline for the experience. If warranted, the youth employment specialist trains the student and employer on how to engage with each other during the experience. LLC also covers the cost of transportation to and from a worksite, if needed.

Youth employment specialists (YES) work with LLC and core students. The YES helps students explore work options, provides training in work-related skills, and arranges work-based learning experiences.

Career consultants (CC) are only available to LLC students. The CC works intensively with students to develop their personalized LLC plan and collaborates with other staff and organizations on dual-enrollment opportunities, work-based learning activities, and assistive technology services.

After each work-based learning experience is completed, the career consultant or youth employment specialist asks the student and employer to fill out a short survey about the experience. The survey responses inform the student's LLC plan. Career consultants and

youth employment specialists also use the responses to arrange additional work-based learning experiences or to otherwise help the student accomplish his or her career goals identified in the LLC plan.

LLC work-based learning experiences



One job-shadowing experience

Generally a half- to full-day experience; student observes a worker and does not do any tasks.



One unpaid internship

Longer than a job-shadowing experience and has a fixed end date; student does real workplace tasks and builds transferable and occupational skills; labor laws clearly define the criteria for training versus employment.



One employer-paid job

Does not have a set end date; frequently occurs during the summer; student does all tasks assigned to the position.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about Linking Learning to Careers and Mathematica's evaluation, visit <https://www.mathematica-mpr.com/our-publications-and-findings/projects/evaluation-of-the-vermont-linking-learning-to-careers-model>

ENDNOTES

¹ Federal Partners in Transition. "What to Know About Work-Based Learning Experiences for Students and Youth with Disabilities." Washington, DC: Author, November 2015. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/transition/products/fpt-fact-sheet--work-based-experiences--11-5-15.pdf>. Accessed November 21, 2018.

² Rogers-Chapman, M., and L. Darling-Hammond. "Preparing 21st Century Citizens: The Role of Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning." Stanford, CA: Stanford Center for Opportunity

Policy in Education, August 2013. Available at <https://edpolicy.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/publications/preparing-21st-century-citizens-role-work-based-learning-linked-learning.pdf>. Accessed November 21, 2018.

³ Luecking, Richard, and Meredith Gramlich. "Quality Work-Based Learning and Postsecondary Employment Success." National Center on Secondary Education and Transition issue brief. Examining Current Challenges in Secondary Education and Transition, vol. 2, no. 2, September 2003. Available at http://www.ncset.org/publications/issue/NCSETIssueBrief_2.2.pdf. Accessed November 21, 2018.

⁴ Federal Partners in Transition. "What to Know About Work-Based Learning Experiences for Students and Youth with Disabilities." Washington, DC: Author, November 2015. Available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/transition/products/fpt-fact-sheet--work-based-experiences--11-5-15.pdf>. Accessed November 21, 2018.

