

# Understanding Work-Based Learning Options for Indiana's High School Students



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The 11 Work-Based Learning (WBL) experience types below, as defined by the Indiana Department of Education, can be used to fulfill Indiana's high school diploma seal requirements. Select an experience below to learn more about the model and how it aligns to diploma seal requirements.

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**Employability Skills Co-Op**

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**Modern Youth Apprenticeship**

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# Understanding Work-Based Learning Options for Indiana's High School Students

## Academic Internship

An academic internship is a hands-on work experience with an employer, where students who are not in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program apply what they've learned in school to real workplace tasks while exploring a career field that interests them.

**Each academic internship should include at least 75 hours of meaningful work.** Students may combine up to three WBL experiences to meet graduation requirements.

Employers play an active role by providing supervision, guidance, and feedback, and by ensuring students take on work that reflects real workplace expectations.

## High School Diploma Seal Alignment

Beginning with the Class of 2029, Indiana's new graduation requirements allow students to earn up to six Diploma Seals, all which demonstrate the student's readiness for college, careers, or military service.

Three (3) of the six (6) Diploma Seals require students to complete one or more WBL experiences.

Enrollment Honors Plus Seal

**75+ Hours  
of WBL**

Employment Honors Seal

**150+ Hours  
of WBL**

Employment Honors Plus Seal

**650+ Hours  
of WBL**



# Work-Based Learning Requirements

Every WBL experience must include the following requirements:

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## SUSTAINED INTERACTION WITH EMPLOYERS

- Minimum of 25 total hours of student work across a single placement.
- May occur before, during, or after school, or outside the school year (e.g., summer).
- Must include active engagement with a current industry professional who supervises, mentors, or reviews student work.

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## AUTHENTIC, COMPETENCY-ALIGNED WORK EXPERIENCE

- Students complete meaningful, age-appropriate tasks beyond simple observation.
- Occurs in a real or simulated workplace aligned to employer-validated competencies.
  - Real settings include on-site or remote experiences that reflect professional work.
  - Simulated settings (in schools or training centers) must model real workplaces, including tools, technology, and expectations.
- The experience culminates in an assessment or portfolio, designed and evaluated by an industry professional, demonstrating mastery of identified skills or competencies.

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## SIGNED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT AND TRAINING PLAN

A written agreement and training plan must be signed by the student, parent/guardian, school, employer, and/or intermediary, outlining:

- Learning outcomes, assessments, and where learning occurs.
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## DOL Registered Apprenticeship Programs

A Registered Apprenticeship is a structured training program, approved by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), where students learn a skilled trade or profession by working directly with an employer. Apprentices gain experience through paid, hands-on work, classroom instruction, and ongoing mentorship that builds real-world expertise.

**Each Registered Apprenticeship should include at least 650 hours of meaningful work to count toward graduation requirements.** Some programs allow students as young as 16 to begin and even complete the apprenticeship while still in high school.

## High School Diploma Seal Alignment

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While a micro-internship could be applicable to any of the Diploma Seals that require work-based learning hours, the Indiana Department of Education recommends the **Enrollment Honors Plus Seal** as the best alignment for this type of WBL experience.



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## Employability Skills Co-Op

Students can complete an Employability Skills Co-op through the Cooperative Education course (6162). This course combines paid, mentored work experience with classroom instruction focused on employability and career readiness skills such as communication, teamwork, and problem-solving.

Students can explore different types of work and gain real-world experience; their placement does not need to match their intended career field or focus on job-specific skills. **However, all Co-op experiences must be paid and include supervision and feedback from an employer.**

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## Industry-Developed Team Challenge

An Industry-Developed Team Challenge is a project-based learning experience where a local employer presents students with a real-world problem or project the company has solved or is currently addressing. Students work in teams to research, design, and propose solutions that connect classroom learning to real industry needs.

**Each Industry-Developed Team Challenge must include at least 25 hours of meaningful work.** Students may combine up to three WBL experiences to meet graduation requirements and earn a Diploma Seal.

Employers play an active role by defining the challenge, engaging with students throughout the process, and providing feedback to ensure the work reflects real industry standards and expectations.

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## Micro-Internships

A micro-internship is a short, focused work experience where students complete real workplace tasks under the guidance of an employer. It offers more hands-on engagement than job shadowing but fits into a shorter timeframe than a traditional internship, making it ideal for exploring a career interest during school breaks or between semesters.

**Each micro-internship must include at least 25 hours of meaningful work.** Students may combine up to three (3) experiences (either the same type or different ones) to meet the Diploma Seal requirement.

Employers play an active role by providing supervision, feedback, and opportunities for students to contribute to authentic work that reflects real industry expectations.

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## Youth Apprenticeship

A Youth Apprenticeship is a state-approved, multi-year program that combines paid, on-the-job training with related classroom instruction. Students work for an employer while still in high school, gaining hands-on experience, building technical and professional skills, and applying what they learn in the classroom to real workplace tasks. Employers play a central role by hiring the student as an apprentice, providing structured supervision and mentorship, and ensuring the work meets industry standards.

Each program follows a competency-based education and training plan that outlines the specific skills students must develop and demonstrate throughout the apprenticeship. Apprentices earn wages, high school credit, and college credit, creating a seamless path from school to career.

**Youth Apprenticeships require at least 650 hours of paid, on-the-job experience to meet graduation requirements.**

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# Understanding Work-Based Learning Options for Indiana's High School Students

## Pre-Apprenticeship

A pre-apprenticeship is a work-based learning experience that prepares students to enter a Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) approved by the U.S. Department of Labor. Students build foundational technical skills through a combination of classroom learning and hands-on work with an employer that aligns to an active Registered Apprenticeship pathway.

Employers play a key role by supervising students, providing mentorship, and ensuring the work they complete reflects the expectations and skills needed to succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship. This helps students gain confidence, explore a career, and transition smoothly into the next stage of training.

**Each pre-apprenticeship should include at least 150 hours of meaningful work to count toward graduation requirements.**

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# Understanding Work-Based Learning Options for Indiana's High School Students

## School-Based Enterprise

A School-Based Enterprise (SBE) is a student-run business that operates inside the school and sells goods or services to real customers. Students take on responsibilities such as managing operations, marketing, finance, and customer service, allowing them to apply classroom learning in a real business setting.

Although the business is operated on school grounds, employers and industry partners play an important role by advising students, reviewing business practices, evaluating work, and helping ensure the experience reflects real workplace expectations and industry standards. This gives students exposure to the skills and professionalism needed for future careers.

**Each SBE experience must include at least 25 hours of meaningful work.** Students may combine up to three WBL experiences to meet graduation requirements and earn a Diploma Seal.

## High School Diploma Seal Alignment

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# Understanding Work-Based Learning Options for Indiana's High School Students

## Student Entrepreneurial Experience

A Student Entrepreneurial Experience is a student-created and student-led business that provides a real opportunity to design, launch, and manage a venture. Students take full ownership of the business (such as a lawn care service, coffee cart, repair shop, or custom design business) while learning how to plan, operate, and sustain a successful enterprise.

Students receive guidance from teachers, mentors, and industry partners, who help ensure the business reflects real workplace expectations and professional standards. Schools or community partners may also provide space, materials, or equipment to support the business.

**Each Student Entrepreneurial Experience must include at least 25 hours of meaningful work.** Students may combine up to three WBL experiences to meet graduation requirements and earn a Diploma Seal.

## High School Diploma Seal Alignment

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## Technical Internship

A technical internship is a hands-on work experience with an employer, where students in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway apply the technical skills learned in their pathway to real workplace tasks and gain experience in their chosen career field.

**Each technical internship should include at least 75 hours of meaningful work.** Students may combine up to three internships to meet graduation requirements.

Employers play an active role by supervising students, providing guidance and feedback, and ensuring the work reflects real industry expectations.

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## Workplace Simulations

A Workplace Simulation is a school-based learning experience that replicates the environment, tools, and expectations of a real workplace. It takes place in a school, career center, or training facility and allows students to take on different roles within a simulated business or organization. Unlike a school-based enterprise, a workplace simulation does not need to operate as a full business, but it must include opportunities for students to interact with real or mock clients or customers as part of their work.

Workplace simulations may be in-person or virtual, but only if the industry being represented can also operate virtually in the real world (for example, a digital marketing firm or IT help desk can be in virtual environments, but not a welding or auto repair shop).

Employers play an important role by helping design and evaluate the simulation, providing feedback on student work, and ensuring the experience reflects real workplace standards and expectations.

**Each Workplace Simulation must include at least 25 hours of meaningful work.** Students may combine up to three WBL experiences to meet graduation requirements and earn a Diploma Seal.

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