

What is Work-Based Learning?



Work-Based Learning (WBL) connects classroom learning to real or simulated workplaces through sustained interactions with industry professionals. These experiences help students build career skills, explore interests, and demonstrate competencies aligned to their coursework.

Work-Based Learning Requirements for Indiana's High Schools Students

[The Indiana Department of Education \(IDOE\)](#) requires that all WBL experiences meet specific criteria to count toward an Honors or Honors Plus Diploma Seal. These standards apply to every type of WBL experience, whether it takes place at a job site, in a classroom, or through a simulated workplace.

Each experience must include **at least 25 hours** of meaningful work and **involve direct interaction with employers**. Students may combine up to three (3) experiences to meet Diploma Seal requirements.

Every WBL experience must include the following requirements:

SUSTAINED INTERACTION WITH EMPLOYERS

Each WBL experience should give students regular interaction with an employer to make sure it reflects real workplace standards.

Requirements:

1. Minimum of 25 total hours of student work across a single placement.
 - o Students may combine up to three experiences to meet a Diploma Seal requirement.
 - o For Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, experiences must include at least 75 hours with one employer and follow an approved partnership agreement and training plan.
- May occur before, during, or after school, or outside the school year.
 - o Summer hours count toward diploma seal requirements, but not for CTE funding.
- Must include active engagement with a current industry professional who supervises, mentors, or reviews student work.



AUTHENTIC, COMPETENCY-ALIGNED WORK EXPERIENCE

Students must take part in meaningful, hands-on work that helps them build and demonstrate the same skills employers value. Experiences occur in real or simulated workplace settings aligned to employer-validated competencies.

Requirements:

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- 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, or expectations.
 - Virtual simulations are only appropriate when the industry itself can operate virtually (for example, IT help desks or digital design, but not welding).
 - The experience culminates in an assessment or portfolio, designed and evaluated by an industry professional, demonstrating mastery of identified skills or competencies.
 - When possible, the experience should connect to earning a [credential of value](#), including the [Indiana College Core](#).

SIGNED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT AND TRAINING PLAN

Every WBL experience must include a written partnership agreement and training plan signed by the student, parent/guardian, school, employer, and/or intermediary to ensure all parties understand the purpose, expectations, and outcomes of the experience.

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The partnership agreement and training plan must include:

- Learning outcomes, assessments, and where learning occurs.
 - Alignment to the student's career interests and pathway or local workforce demand.
 - Duration, compensation, and participant expectations.
 - Partner roles, supports, and any financial or staffing commitments.
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