

Wisconsin's Employability Skills Certificate Program

Overview



The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional or learning disability.

Work-Based Learning Overview

“Learning by doing” is the foundation of *work-based learning*. Students must be provided the opportunity to participate in a paid work experience that assesses the state-approved competencies. Work experience also supports the *related classroom instruction* and contextualizes the learning.

Work-based learning at the workplace and under the guidance of the *workplace mentor* develops the technical skills which are related to a student’s performance in entry-level employment. Students demonstrate competencies learned in the classroom while performing tasks or functions of work at the workplace. The *workplace mentor* is directly involved in the training as well as the assessment of the skill level of the student.

Work-based learning requires the integration of academic content and technical skill development. This effort is supported by Wisconsin’s education for employment standard (m) which emphasizes the need for:

- business and education partnerships,
- application of basic skills,
- career development,
- employability skills and attitudes,
- school-supervised work experience, and
- knowledge of *all aspects of an industry*.

Because the *work-based learning* component of this program is delivered outside the local school district, it is important that the local school work closely with the employer to establish policies and procedures. Students, schools and employers are required to follow all state and federal child labor regulations pertaining to work experience programs.

For more specific information on child labor laws and work experience programs, contact the Equal Rights Division, Labor Standards Bureau, Department of Workforce Development, P. O. Box 7946, Madison, WI 53707-7946 (608) 266-3345.

General Program Design

The intent of the *Wisconsin Employability Skills Certificate Program* is to recognize a student’s mastery of employability skills valued by employers, to help students explore career interests, and to provide a state credential of student mastery. This program allows:

- Students to document their employability skills
- Employers to assess the skills they are looking for in quality employees
- Educators to customize instruction to help learners to acquire skills that today’s workplace requires.

The Employability Skills Certificate Program consists of the following required components:

- Reinforcing **21st Century Skills** in Personal Work Habits and Attitudes
- Completion of **90 on-the-job work hours**
- Career Exploration and Planning

It is also designed to provide local flexibility in its coordination and implementation.

1. Today's worker must be conscientious of **21st Century Skills** framework needed for success in the workplace. This framework describes the skills, knowledge and expertise students must master to succeed in work and life; it is a blend of content knowledge, specific skills, expertise and literacies. **21st Century Skills** embraces life and career skills; information, media and technology skills; and learning and innovation skills. Within the context of core knowledge instruction, students must also learn the essential skills for success in today's world, such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration.
2. The **work-based component** of the program may be met in any number of jobs/activities. School districts are encouraged to review current local work-based learning programs against the program requirements for offering this program to their students.
 - Students already involved in a school-supervised work-based learning activity such as regular cooperative education, a work experience program, an internship, or service learning can use that experience for the work-based portion of this program.
 - If a school district has a work-based program that is locally certified it may want to consider applying for approval from DPI to offer it as a state certified program.
 - Schools that operate a school-based enterprise (in lieu of work-based opportunities in the community) **may** be permitted to have participating students do a job shadow to fulfill the work-based requirement. (Note: This is a special case, which requires prior discussion with DPI. Typically, job shadowing in and of itself will not meet the work-based component requirement since job shadowing is nonproductive work, by definition. For students to learn employability skills they must be engaged in work.)
 - Students participating in a certified cooperative education program or a youth apprenticeship may also enroll in the *Wisconsin Employability Skills Certificate Program*, to earn both certifications.
 - The **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction issues the state certificate.**
 - Students aged 14 and above are eligible to participate in this program.
 - The minimum number of work hours required of students is 90 hours which can be completed over the course of a quarter, semester, summer, year or longer, depending on individual student capacity to learn and district capacity to deliver.
 - Occupationally related instruction is not required for the *Employability Skills Certificate Program* although it could be a part of a given work-based learning program such as cooperative education wherein related instruction in skill development is taught in addition to student's learning employability skills.
3. **Career exploration and planning** are essential components of career development and the cornerstone for making appropriate career, educational, and occupational choices. Selecting a relevant *Program of Study (POS)* offered by your school leads to the development of an *Individual Learning Plan (ILP)* which will facilitate students' smooth transition from school to work or further learning. An *ILP* will assist students and parents in relating each student's career interests and post-secondary higher education aspirations to individual aptitudes and achievements. The specific objective is to create a plan of action that the student will follow after graduation. The plan provides concrete post-secondary plans and tentative career goals, identifies the steps that are required, and reinforces the commitment and responsibility of each student to take charge of his or her career. This written document is developed jointly by students, parents, and school personnel. Although *ILP* development is a joint venture and the post-secondary plan ultimately reflects decisions made by students and parents, the school is responsible for managing the process and for providing students and parents with objective data that enable them to periodically re-evaluate the plan. This career exploration will lead to the creation of a portfolio the students can utilize to transition from high school to further education or a career.

The certificate earned by the student will be issued by the State of Wisconsin and becomes a part of the student's portfolio.

Local Program Eligibility

School districts offering this program must:

- Provide DPI-licensed teachers that will work with students, their parents, and employers to implement the program.
- Provide *Supervising teachers* time to coordinate the program, conduct work site visits, etc. One-half hour per student per week is the amount of time recommended to accomplish the above-listed tasks.
- Ensure the certificate becomes a part of the student's career portfolio.
- Be approved by DPI on an annual basis as meeting the program requirements.

Local Program Requirements

School districts that are interested in offering the *Employability Skill Certificate Program* must register the program with DPI. High schools seeking program approval must agree to the following requirements and methods of implementation:

1. The program must be operated by the local school district in partnership with business and/or industry. This includes a business/industry advisory council consisting of local employers, parents, labor representatives, and educators that are involved in the planning and evaluation of the program. Existing School-to-Work, Education for Employment, or other similar advisory groups may be used to meet this requirement.
2. Students are to be placed with employers in accordance with their abilities and career objectives through a comprehensive career development process. For some students without a career interest area, the work-based experience will serve as a career exploration activity. The student selection process must be fair, equitable, address the needs of all student populations, and adhere to all state and federal laws.
3. The learning activities at school and in the community must be rigorous in providing for opportunities to achieve the employability skills and learning goals listed in the *Student Achievement Record* issued by DPI.
4. A DPI licensed teacher serves as the *supervising teacher* for the program in accordance with all program requirements.
5. A *Training Agreement* is on file for every student participating in the program. This written agreement specifies commitment and responsibilities of the employer, the student, the school and the parent/guardian, and is signed by each prior to the start of the work-based experience. This agreement prevents any misunderstandings about the program and the procedures to be followed during the work-based experience.
6. The school must put a process in place that ensures the completion of an *Individual Learning Plan* by each student applying for an *Employability Skills Certificate*.

Selection of Students

The *work-based learning* experience is the responsibility of the *supervising teacher* working with the student and the employer. The *supervising teacher* secures the workplace *and* matches the student with the workplace

in order to meet the student's career goal. The *supervising teacher* must take into account the student's personal goals and abilities. The ultimate decision for workplace assignment is made between the *supervising teacher* and the employer.

The selection process should not eliminate problem students or allow only high-ability students to enroll in the program. Rather, it is a means of serving *all student populations* based on individualized career goals and abilities. The only restriction on the number of students in the program is availability and suitability of workplaces and size of classroom facilities.

Partner Expectations

Students participating in the *Employability Skills Certificate Program* are responsible for the following:

- ◆ Obtaining a work permit
- ◆ Attending school on a regular basis unless pre-excused or upon notification from parent/guardian that the student will not be attending school for a specified period of time
- ◆ Notifying the school and the cooperating employer in advance when absence is unavoidable
- ◆ Meeting local program enrollment and participation requirements (e.g., keep in good academic standing, etc.)
- ◆ Furnishing the supervising teacher with all necessary information and completing all necessary reports
- ◆ Discussing any problems on the job with the supervising teacher
- ◆ Reporting promptly and engaging in the work assignment according to the training schedule
- ◆ Keeping all business information of the cooperating employer confidential
- ◆ Cooperating with the workplace supervisor/mentor, engaging in assignments as a training experience, observing workplace etiquette and observing safety rules
- ◆ Abiding by the rules and regulations of the cooperating employer
- ◆ Keeping all business information of the cooperating employer confidential

Supervising teachers will be responsible for the following:

- ◆ Visiting and assisting employers in establishing training programs
- ◆ Observing each student on the job
- ◆ Cooperating with the employer in the evaluation of the student
- ◆ Making every attempt to solve problems that may arise from the cooperating agency, school, parent/guardian, student or community
- ◆ Providing in-school instruction related to the training activities of the student (as appropriate)
- ◆ Developing and implementing a curriculum based upon pre-employment, employment and post-employment skills
- ◆ Working with a local advisory committee to obtain assistance with the program
- ◆ Cooperating with the employer in further safety training
- ◆ Developing a student selection process appropriate for the needs and desires of the students and the opportunities presented by the cooperating employers
- ◆ Providing employer/workplace mentor orientation on working with high school-age youth

Employers participating in the *Employability Skills Certificate Program* will be responsible for the following:

- ◆ Providing a training program, with varied experiences, which will contribute to the education of the student
- ◆ Providing supervision/workplace mentor for the training of the student
- ◆ Providing employment for the student during the agreed upon times
- ◆ Adhering to all state and federal child labor laws
- ◆ Providing for the day-to-day safety of the student on the job

- ◆ Providing training to the student which matches the learning experiences to individual student capabilities
- ◆ Offering a well-rounded variety of learning experience for the student
- ◆ Participating in the development of the individual training plan and agreement in cooperation with the student and the supervising teacher
- ◆ Cooperating with the supervising teacher in evaluating the student
- ◆ Maintaining a physical and moral environment appropriate and beneficial to the student
- ◆ Providing wages to the student comparable to those paid to similar entry-level workers in the company

Student Assessment

The *supervising teacher*, along with input from the employer and the student, is responsible for assessing student progress during each grading period on the learning goals and employability skills identified on the *Student Employability Skills Record*. For those tasks on which the student receives a low rating, the teacher identifies specific areas where improvement is needed and suggests ways the student can improve performance. For tasks on which the student receives high marks, the teacher may give examples that illustrate the outstanding performance. A procedure for student assessment is described below.

The *supervising teacher* and the *workplace mentor* are responsible for:

1. *Assessment of student progress during each grading period on the identified tasks and state-approved competencies.*

Working together, the *workplace mentor* and the *supervising teacher* evaluate the student's performance for each task and competency previously identified. For those tasks on which the student receives a low rating, the *workplace mentor* identifies specific areas where improvement is needed and suggests ways the student can improve performance. For tasks on which the student receives high marks, the *workplace mentor* may give examples that illustrate the outstanding performance.

Students may master some tasks and competencies at both sites. Additional tasks and competencies to be mastered and assessed during the next grading period are determined.

2. *Communication of results of the assessment to the student.*

The *supervising teacher* and the *workplace mentor* meet with the student to discuss the evaluation, identify areas that need to be improved, inform the student of the *workplace mentor's* suggestions for improvement, identify strengths that have been pointed out on the job and in the classroom, and provide evidence to support the evaluation of the tasks and state-approved competencies.

Give the student a copy of the tasks and state-approved competencies identified for the next grading period.

3. *Continuation of the evaluation process.*

For each assessment period established by the school, the *supervising teacher*, working with the student and *workplace mentor*, should repeat this process.

Registration Information

Local education agencies (LEAs) wishing to offer the *Employability Skills Certificate Program* must register the program(s) with the Department of Public Instruction **prior** to implementing the program. Program registration information may be found online at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/cte/cteskills.html>. A separate registration must be

completed for each individual program being operated. Once registered, the LEA will assume the responsibility to ensure that all procedures as described in this guide are followed.

For information about Wisconsin's *Employability Skills Certificate Program* or the registration process, please contact Denise Byrd, Office Operations Associate, 608-267-2274, denise.byrd@dpi.wi.gov