

Illinois Center for
Transition and Work



INCLUSIVE WORK IN ILLINOIS

Overcoming Challenges to Providing Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE)

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About Me and the ICTW

- Training Specialist with the ICTW-Illinois Center for Transition and Work with the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign
- I have worked in special education for 17 years, 9 of those years have been working with transition-age students.
- Prior to becoming a training specialist, I was the principal for a transition program in Bolingbrook, IL. I was also the Transition Specialist for that program prior to becoming the principal.
- My passion is finding the right employment pathway for people with disabilities.



Who is in the Audience?

- Special Education Teachers
- District Administrators/Vocational Coordinators
- VR/DRS
- Adult Agency Staff
- Job Coaches/Support Staff
- Special Education Coops



Where are you at in your WBLE journey?

Take the poll by either scanning the QR code or texting [MELANIEPHELAN287](https://text.pollfish.com/MELANIEPHELAN287) to [37607](https://text.pollfish.com/37607) to join the session, then they text your answer.

[View Poll results](#)



SCAN ME



WBL is defined in Perkins V legislation as “sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable, or simulated environments at an educational institution that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field, that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.”



In 2021, **19.1%** of persons with a disability were employed.

For persons without a disability, 63.7% were employed in 2021.



(Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022)



Importance of Work Based Learning Experiences

- Exploration of careers
- Self-exploration of interests, strengths and abilities
- Develop positive work habits and attitudes
- Develop important soft skills
- Expand on professional networks
- Find out what natural supports are available
- Help schools/transition programs improve postschool outcomes

(Cease-Cook, Fowler, & Test, 2015)



Challenges to Providing WBLEs



Resources

- Transportation
 - Availability
 - Inflexible schedule/routes
- Amount of staff
 - Need more staff
 - Proper training
- Funding WBLE
 - Knowledge of school-based funding streams
 - Using funds for WBLE



Opportunities

- Placement options
 - Limited/restricted
 - Meaningful
- School policies
 - Meet specific criteria
 - Doesn't work with schedule
- No clear guidelines for who was responsible for WBLE
 - One teacher responsible or no one is assigned
 - Little collaboration with other teachers/vocational professionals
 - Limited knowledge of WBLE



Stakeholder Support

- Support from businesses
 - Liability
 - Training to work with people with disabilities
 - Follow rules/policies
- Support from administration and school staff
 - Don't see value
 - District buy-in
- Parent buy-in to WBLE
 - Not a priority
 - Perceptions in the community or school
 - College more important than training
- Support from community members
 - Negative perceptions
 - Acceptance



Time

- Finding time within the school day
 - Core curriculum is a priority
 - Class schedule inflexible
 - Lack of time in the community
- Lack of time to plan and organize WBLE
 - Large caseloads
 - Lack of release time
 - Paraprofessional collaboration
 - Teaching/prep obligations



Support for Students

- Students with extensive support needs had greater barriers
- Difficult to organize WBLE for students with extensive needs
- Finding accommodations/modifications that are appropriate



Strategies for Overcoming Challenges

- Review funding with district administrators
- No public transportation? Find out what else is available in your area
 - Bring WBLE to the classroom
 - [Other options](#)
- Tap into employer networks, such as your local Chamber of Commerce (Scheef, 2019).
- Improve capacity for working with individuals with disabilities (Scheef, 2019). [FAQ for Employers](#)



More Strategies

- Persistence with businesses-be the face of your program/agency
 - Career Fairs
 - Develop relationships with employers and business owners
- Collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation in your area (Rooney-Kron & Dymond, 2021)
- Review schedules and look at allocating time during the workday. (Rooney-Kron & Dymond, 2021)
- Review existing school policies-promote equity (Rooney-Kron & Dymond, 2021)



Strategies Continued ...

- Frequent communication with all stakeholders, especially parents. Parental expectations were one of the strongest predictors of successful postschool outcomes (Domin et al, 2020) [Effective Job Development Strategies](#)

“Youth whose parents expected they would be employed after high school were 58 times more likely to be employed up to 2 years out and 50 times more likely to be employed 2 to 4 years out of high school than youth whose parents did not expect they would be employed.” (Papay & Bambara, 2014).



Summary

Work-based learning experiences are very meaningful to the post-secondary success of students with significant disabilities. When students participate in work-based learning experiences through high school and transition, the likelihood of them securing paid employment increases (Carter, Austin, Trainor, 2011).

https://youtu.be/Ae_Ru1KbokY



Additional Resources



- transitionta.org – National Technical Assistance Center on Transition
- www.illinoiscec.net/chapters-subdivisions/illinois-division-of-career-development-and-transition-idcdt – IL Division of Career Development and Transition (IDCDT)
- tash.org – TASH
- www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=51120 – Illinois Department of Human Services
- www.pacebus.com/riders-disabilities – PACE Bus info
- ccrpc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Illinois-Public-Transit-System-Map-Contacts-2.pdf – Illinois Public Transit System
- www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12&officetype=&county – DHS Office Locator
- <https://explore-work.com/> - Explore Work: Online guided for developing work skills



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