

WORK-BASED LEARNING



High-quality CTE programs of study incorporate a full continuum of sustained, meaningful interactions with industry or community professionals that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field.

career goals. Staff will also need to continue to supervise student experiences across all scenarios.

In-person Considerations

If nearly all students return to in-person learning, then learners may be allowed by the school system or institution to go out to the worksite for tours, job shadows, internships and/or apprenticeships. It is likely, however, that worksites will place restrictions on student (and instructor) access for safety and liability reasons. This will impact the availability of WBL, especially for minors. Adult interns and apprentices may be more likely to be allowed on site, and may even be needed in essential industries.

One option for internships and apprenticeships is to pursue placements in businesses deemed essential, bearing in mind that many businesses encompass a range of occupations, from frontline workers to business and marketing staff to IT support. Students in the trades may be able to resume placements safely in outdoor spaces with proper protective equipment, and since health care is an essential business, students may be able to resume clinical experiences. In California, nursing students are able to join the [California Health Corps](#) for paid placements assisting in health care facilities. While these experiences may not replace required clinical hours for licensure, they can provide important WBL opportunities for students.



Key Issues to Address

- Identifying business and community partners' capacity and willingness to engage in WBL
- Maintaining WBL alignment with students' educational goals
- Identifying employers that can accept learners on the worksite
- Promoting social distancing and learner safety on the worksite
- Integrating WBL into in-person or remote instruction through school-based models
- Using virtual and simulated platforms for WBL

When considering how to offer work-based learning (WBL) in a COVID-19-impacted environment, CTE educators must first be aware of district, institution or college system guidance and requirements, as well as state requirements. Several states this spring, such as [Wisconsin](#), changed requirements for WBL by allowing waivers, suggesting telework or enabling students to make up hours after the school year.

Furthermore, local unemployment, industry social distancing requirements and employers' willingness to accept liability for learners will have a major impact on the availability of WBL. Some industries may have a large pool of unemployed and underemployed adults to turn to, which would reduce their need for interns and apprentices, particularly on the secondary level. Liability concerns will also be paramount. In addition, employers may be even more challenged than before to find time to coordinate activities like guest speaking or job shadows, or to provide mentors for students in worksite placements.

Regardless of the instructional model chosen, it will be important to pay close attention to students' WBL training plans to facilitate activities or placements that develop and reinforce technical, academic and employability skills and align to students' education and

When students are placed on a worksite, the training agreement should incorporate relevant social distancing guidelines or requirements and be developed carefully to address liability issues. For instance, some districts are considering asking learners or their guardians to sign waivers. These waivers or other guidelines should be developed with legal counsel. CTE programs should also consider whether and how to provide transportation to the worksite, so that students do not have to use public transit, and make plans for educators to monitor student placements in person, including the safety aspects of the jobsite.

If campuses are open, but local conditions preclude worksite-based experiences, school-based or virtual models can be used. For instance, industry professionals could set up a real-world challenge or task for learners, interact with students through periodic progress meetings and evaluate the final products, which can all occur remotely. To reduce exposure among students, the more collaborative aspects of such projects may need to be curtailed.

Another option is modeling the classroom as a business that is operated by learners. One of the leading examples of this approach is the Simulated Workplace model in [West Virginia](#) and [Alabama](#), which includes industry professionals who help develop and serve as inspectors for each Simulated Workplace. During COVID-19-impacted learning, collaboration with industry partners can be limited to periodic, socially distanced or virtual interactions and inspections.

The final school-based option, school-based enterprises (SBEs), will be highly dependent on the nature of the enterprise, state and local distancing and cleaning protocols, and guidelines about off-campus visitors. SBEs like campus stores or restaurants may need to limit services to students and staff and operate using social distancing and disinfection protocols for food service, such as disposable utensils, or switch to an online order and delivery model. SBEs that serve external customers, like automotive service centers and pet grooming services, may need to close; if able to stay open, they will need to follow state and local social distancing and disinfection protocols, too. The easiest SBEs to continue operating with social distancing will be those that serve clients remotely, such as a 3D printing firm that takes online orders and mails completed products to clients.

Remote Considerations

Districts and institutions were already exploring the world of virtual WBL prior to COVID-19; campus

closures this spring have accelerated that trend. Remote WBL most frequently takes the form of virtual worksite tours, interviews with industry professionals and virtual mentoring sessions. These can vary in intensity from a few minutes of pre-recorded video to live, interactive meetings with industry professionals on the worksite. There are several platforms that can help instructors and students connect virtually with industry leaders; learn more in the [Resources, Tools and Examples](#) section below.

Virtual micro-internships, internships and apprenticeships are another option, although these will likely be most suitable for career areas that require less specialized equipment, while health care learners may be able to take part in simulated clinicals, which were allowed in [Oregon](#) in the spring. Extended reality (XR) and other simulations can also help students practice employability skills through authentic workplace scenarios that they can interact with and respond to. Several possible platforms for remote and XR WBL are included in the [Resources, Tools and Examples](#) section.

Some SBEs can also be operated virtually or with limited social interaction, such as the 3D printing business described above, or others in fields like graphic design or video production. In addition, simulated businesses and industry-driven projects can happen remotely, although this is again dependent on the program of the study and the nature of the project.

In some places, even if the campus remains closed for in-person learning, students may be able to be placed on site in businesses that are open and practicing safe social distancing, as described in the [In-person Considerations](#) section above. In any worksite placement, the safety and liability issues discussed above will need to be addressed.

Access and Equity Implications

When you are considering how to provide students with WBL, remember that some learners in high-poverty or rural areas can have a harder time finding WBL placements, as well as accessing safe methods of transportation. These challenges are likely to be exacerbated by the current economic conditions, with many businesses struggling as well. In addition, lack of access to high-speed internet and devices can hamper learner participation in remote WBL.



Blended Considerations

In a blended learning environment, instructors may be able to combine worksite, school-based and virtual WBL models. The implementation of school-based models would differ most significantly in the blended scenario, as limited time on campus would impact the design and operations of industry-driven projects, simulated businesses and SBEs. These activities would need to be designed with more remote elements in mind, or with tasks split between student groups if the blended model involves cohorts that rotate on and off campus.



Resources, Tools and Examples

- Advance CTE’s [CTE on the Frontier](#) series includes profiles of West Virginia Simulated Workplaces and SBEs offered through the Connecticut Technical High School System.
- The [Direct Employers Institute Workplace Simulation Program](#) enables underrepresented and underexposed students to apply classroom learning to a real STEM problem during school hours and under the guidance of STEM professionals.

- [Simulated Work-Based Learning: Instructional Approaches and Noteworthy Practices](#) includes case studies of Simulated Workplaces, SBEs and industry-driven projects.
- [Nepris](#) is a virtual platform that connects classrooms with industry professionals that has been used by education systems in [Texas](#), [Kansas City](#), [Orange County](#) and [Louisiana](#). The District of Columbia has partnered with Nepris for [DC Career Conversations](#). In 2020 the district’s [Summer Youth Employment Program](#) will include virtual internships and Career Edge curriculum, with some hybrid activities for ages 22-24.
- [Practera](#), [Symba](#) and [Parker Dewey](#) are platforms for connecting college students and employers for remote internships. Practera recently made its service available for free to colleges until August 2021. [Transfr VR](#) provides XR-based manufacturing training for specific employer skill needs.
- [INSPIRE Sheboygan County](#), a nonprofit education-industry collaborative in Wisconsin, pivoted to offering virtual job shadows in spring 2020.
- This [blog post](#) from JFF encourages programs to sustain apprenticeship. During spring 2020, some states modified apprenticeship and youth apprenticeship requirements, as in [Wisconsin](#).
- ACTE has an active [Work-based Learning section](#) that recently co-hosted a virtual conference on WBL with Iowa.

This is an excerpt from [High-quality CTE: Planning for a COVID-19-impacted School Year](#). Access the complete guide for additional content about providing high-quality CTE programs in a COVID-19-impacted school year. **Last Update:** June 22, 2020

This document is not legal advice, nor is it an exhaustive list of every consideration or action that CTE educators may need to take for the 2020–21 school year. Readers should defer to federal, state, local and/or institution requirements and guidance. The instructional models, ideas, resources, tools and examples shared do not constitute endorsements of any products, services or strategies, as different products, services and strategies will work in different contexts. As knowledge is gained, this guide may be updated to incorporate new ideas and resources and emerging issues.

Work-based Learning: Key Questions to Consider



Cross-cutting Questions

- Has your local department of health, county government, state, system, district and/or institution provided any guidance, waivers or other changes to WBL requirements?
- What capacity for WBL do local businesses have? Do they need interns and apprentices? Do they have time to coordinate job shadows or similar experiences?
- How will you continue to align WBL training plans with desired learning outcomes?

In-person Questions

- Will your local department of health, county government and/or institution allow students to go to a worksite, or are all off-campus activities cancelled?
- Will your industry partners allow learners and/or teachers on the worksite? Are there essential businesses in which you could place learners?
- If learners can be on worksites, what social distancing is required? How will you address liability? How will educators monitor the safety of students in those placements, as well as the desired learning outcomes?
- If learners would normally use public transit or school buses to get to the worksite, can another transportation option be found?
- How can you integrate WBL into the classroom through industry-driven projects or by transforming the classroom into a simulated business? Can industry partners offer guidance, collaboration and evaluation in remote or socially distanced ways?
- Will your local department of health, county government and/or institution allow SBEs to reopen with social distancing, or can you switch to an online order and delivery model?

Remote Questions

- How can you use virtual WBL platforms and other remote tools that connect learners and industry partners and help learners learn about work?
- Does your CTE program of study lend itself to virtual internships, apprenticeships or clinicals? Do you have industry partners who are in a position to support virtual interns or apprentices?
- How can you integrate WBL into the remote classroom through industry-driven projects or by transforming the remote classroom into a simulated business? Can industry partners offer guidance, collaboration and evaluation remotely?
- If you offer any SBEs, how can these continue to operate remotely?
- How can you use simulations to enable students to practice employability skills in authentic workplace scenarios?
- Will any worksite placements be allowed for students even if campuses remain closed?

Blended Questions

- How will institution and program scheduling decisions facilitate access to WBL experiences for all students?
- How can you design school-based WBL projects and activities to accommodate limited time on campus?
- If you are operating an SBE, how will you assign tasks to different groups of students as they rotate on and off campus?