



Internships

Studies show that Oklahoma currently faces a large work skills gap. In 2016, approximately half (46 percent) of the Oklahoma workforce had either attained only a high school diploma or dropped out of high school altogether. However, by 2025, 77 percent of Oklahoma jobs will require some form of education beyond high school. This is why it is important more than ever to provide students with high-quality work-based experiences. (Oklahoma works)

WBL takes many forms and often includes experiences such as: internships, job shadowing, and service-learning. “High-quality work-based learning experiences pair young people with mentors who show them how to solve real-world problems, cultivate professional skills, shoulder adult responsibilities, build workplace relationships, identify interests and aptitudes, and make good decisions about careers and college.” (The Southern Regional Education Board)

WHAT IS AN INTERNSHIP?

A high school internship can provide a student with a clear roadmap for life after high school. Internships can help students gain confidence and a better understanding of the professional world, while validating and / or challenging their postsecondary plans. This type of experience can be applied to their academic and personal life. Benefits from internships include:

- An internship can help a student connect with people in the professional world. Establishing networking connections with professionals can help students along their chosen career path.
- Internships allow students to connect with mentors, and write a recommendation letter, and/or serve as a reference for their future job or volunteer opportunity

THINGS TO CONSIDER

When creating an internship program it is important to make sure that a student's experience supports their Individual Career Academic Plan (ICAP). An internship program is most successful when it is flexible and provides all students the opportunity to participate in workforce, mentorship, and leadership activities. Before you begin designing your program, consider using a [planning document](#) to ensure that you create an equitable program that is able to yield successful outcomes, remain on schedule, and create equitable opportunities. Using a planning resource can also be a useful strategy for engaging diverse stakeholders such as higher education and industry systems to help coordinate efforts to prepare students for future workforce opportunities.

IMPLEMENTATION EXAMPLES

Workplace Internships

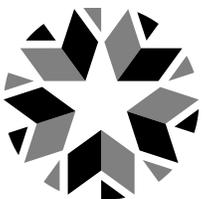
A workplace internship provides a student the opportunity to intern off school campus in a professional workforce setting. This experience may include: attending meetings with supervisors or teammates, completing individual or group projects, learning about the company culture and industry at large, and reflecting upon their experience. When developing a workplace internship it is important to develop policies for student safety, transportation, course design, and expected outcomes. For more guidance, [view Internships FAQs](#).

Classroom Internships

In order to prepare students for the increasing digital demand in the workforce, [some districts](#) began offering distanced internship opportunities for students that connect them with employers across the state without ever leaving the classroom. This method is optimal for districts who are in a virtual environment, have limited transportation, limited access to industry, or experience liability barriers. Internship course requirements remain the same for students whether on or off-campus, schools interested in this model should review the internship guidelines.

RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS

- Create an [internship guide](#) for your course complete with letters to employers, student reflections, and course expectations.
- Districts should consider sending business partnership [letters](#) and [agreements](#) to their local businesses or chambers of commerce.
- K-12 school districts can initiate or continue relationships with their local tribal nations by contacting appropriate tribal leaders. This [helpful guide](#) shows appropriate leaders to contact at each Oklahoma Tribal Educational Agency.
- Consider using a [resource](#) for students to reflect upon their work-based learning (WBL) experiences to show how WBL can help achieve their career goals. Each ICAP online tool will have a section to provide this information, encourage students to add as much detail as possible.
- Consider [increasing access](#) to effective college and career advisors or counselors.
- Examine inequities in college and career preparatory resources on the OSDE's [Postsecondary Indicator Guidance](#) resource.



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