



## Recruiting and Enrolling Students

Work-based learning exists to help all students who want and need it. As an elective offering, teacher-coordinators must let students know what the program is all about and how the experience can benefit them. This section outlines a system for recruiting, informing, and enrolling students in the work-based learning program.

### General Information

Admission to a work-based learning program should be concerned primarily with the proper fit of student needs and program purpose. To assume that there are “better” or “worse” applicants is to misinterpret the goals of the work-based learning program. Remember that students’ in-school performance may not accurately predict performance in the work-based learning program or, ultimately, in the workforce. Criteria for admission should be established by the teacher-coordinator, with suggestions and recommendations from school guidance counselors, administrators, and other teachers. When admissions criteria are approved, the teacher-coordinator assumes responsibility for final decisions about who is admitted to the program. Students in the program must be placed in a job, thus their “employability” should be considered during the admission process. In addition, students must be able to provide (or have access to) reliable and consistent transportation in order to participate.

### The Student Admission Process

The admission process outlined in this section includes six steps: recruiting, applying, gathering information, interviewing, deciding, and informing students about status.

#### *Step 1: Recruiting*

This informational step involves publicizing and marketing the program and its opportunities. Within the context of the work-based learning process, recruiting involves the following:

- Informing students about the purposes of work-based learning;
- Showing students how participation in work-based learning can benefit them; and
- Honestly explaining opportunities available as a result of participating in the work-based learning experience.

While recruiting, teacher-coordinators should keep in mind that work-based learning is for those who need it, want it, and can profit educationally from it. Before beginning an active recruitment process, teacher-coordinators should meet with the school administrator to discuss any policies affecting the extent to which individuals or departments may promote particular activities or programs. Administrators generally strive to assure that all students and staff are informed about all school programs and normally offer considerable latitude for teacher-coordinators to inform students of the work-based learning program. Suggested methods and techniques to effectively recruit students, many of which are on-going responsibilities of teacher-coordinators, include:

- Referrals from teachers and counselors;
- Referrals and recommendations from current work-based learning students;
- Presentations by current students;

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- Building announcements;
- Presentations by work-based learning staff at school assemblies or in classrooms;
- Brochures or information sheets distributed to students;
- Referrals from employers and training sponsors when students apply for jobs;
- Displays using social media, bulletin boards and other appropriate locations; and
- Results of student surveys.

Recruiting becomes much easier when viewed as part of a well-developed marketing or public relations plan (See Program Management). These activities can ensure that students who may benefit from participation in the work-based learning program are appropriately informed about opportunities available to them. Although students generally enroll in work-based learning at specified times, most successful teacher-coordinators make student recruitment a continuous effort.

Teacher-coordinators realize that highly professional behavior is extremely important in the recruitment process. Any evidence of high pressure campaigning to encourage students to enroll will work against the long-term objectives of the recruiting effort. By developing and implementing an on-going public relations plan, teacher-coordinators will make the best use of resources and be effective in recruiting students for the program.

## *Step 2: Applying*

The first evidence of an effective recruitment program is the application from prospective participants. Application forms for the work-based learning program should be created, distributed widely, and used to gather information for making decisions about potential students. Existing school registration procedures may offer a model system to use.

Application forms created for the work-based learning program should be readily available through standard school offices, including guidance and counseling. Frequently, schools with more than one work-based learning program use a single application form for all programs. Information on the form should be sufficient to determine which program would be appropriate for the student applicant. At minimum, the form should provide sections for information concerning:

- Personal background;
- Career interests;
- Current class schedule;
- Completed courses that relate directly to the training opportunity;
- School attendance history;
- Previous work experience;
- Names of teachers and others who can provide recommendations;
- Instructions for completing and returning the form; and
- Student and parent/guardian signatures.

A statement of student agreement that helps define the specific student and school responsibilities should be part of the application process, and it should be signed by both the

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student and parents to indicate their intent to abide by all oral and written expectations. (A [Student Agreement](#) should not be confused with the [Training Agreement](#), which outlines training station rules and regulations. See Training Stations.)

## *Step 3: Gathering Information*

Much of the information needed for decisions about appropriate program participants can be found on the student application form. Other information to be considered in the admission process may be found by:

- Seeking recommendations from teachers listed on the form;
- Seeking recommendations from previous employers listed;
- Examining the student's cumulative record;
- Examining the student's attendance, tardiness, and behavioral records;
- Meeting with the school nurse or other appropriate school personnel;
- Seeking input from the student's current and former teachers, counselors, and administrators;
- Meeting with the student's parents or guardians;
- Obtaining a signed parental approval form, when appropriate.

The more information about a student that the teacher-coordinator can obtain, the more likely the decision made will result in a successful work experience.

## *Step 4: Interviewing*

Several suggestions have been made for collecting information about each applicant, but the most important method of learning about the student is the interview.

The interview is a structured, two-way, information-sharing opportunity. The teacher-coordinator should be learning about the student, and the student should be learning about the work-based learning program and the responsibilities of the work experience.

To establish a favorable environment for the free-flow of two-way communication, teacher-coordinators should create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere and encourage active participation by the student. The discussion may include items such as:

- Purpose of the work-based learning program;
- Program policies;
- Parental approval forms;
- Student occupational aspirations;
- Related-class lesson content;
- Opportunities and limitations within the indicated occupation;
- Details of the student training agreement;
- Student work history; and
- Student motivation to participate in the work-based learning program.



## *Step 5: Deciding*

At this point, teacher-coordinators should have collected all appropriate information on which to base a decision. Decisions should be made as objectively as possible, based on a clear set of criteria. For example, a student must:

- Be in good standing in the school;
- Be at least 16 years of age;
- Have an occupational objective (to discourage students merely looking for money or school release time);
- Have successfully completed the required sequence of proper courses before enrolling;
- Have good recommendations from a certain number of other staff or adults;
- Have a good attendance record or a firm commitment to improve; and
- Show desire and potential to benefit from work-based learning.

Decisions should be made on the basis of the needs of the student compared with the criteria established for the program, rather than trying to create some kind of “proper” or “model” work-based learning student. The “best” students are ones whose needs can be met by the program and who have the commitment to fulfill their agreement.

## *Step 6: Informing Students about Admission Status*

Once decisions have been made regarding students admitted to the program (subject to appropriate employment), all students who have applied should be informed of the decisions and their application status. If a large number of responses must be made, teacher-coordinators may choose to inform students by letter. Whenever possible, however, personal contact is recommended so student questions can be answered.

For all students who are accepted, permanent files should be created. Documents that may ultimately be included in the permanent folder are:

- Completed application form;
- Personal data sheet;
- Signed parental approval form;
- Signed training agreement;
- Signed training plan;
- Wage and hour report(s);
- Employer insurance certification;
- Class schedules; and
- Evaluation forms.

Notification to students of acceptance into the work-based learning program should include information about a scheduled orientation session.

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## Orientation to Student Responsibilities during On-the-Job Training

Work experience students will benefit from an organized orientation program to help them understand requirements of the worksite and their responsibilities to the employer, to themselves, and to the work-based learning program.

Successful work-based learning programs establish consistent policies and procedures, and expect participants to adhere to them. Teacher-coordinators may want to develop a “student guide” as a way of ensuring that all students receive the same information, and to provide a reference that students can use throughout their work experience year.

Orientation programs should cover any rules, regulations, and expectations of the work-based learning program, as well as those specific to each of the employers where students are placed. Students will also benefit from receiving any employment guides or manuals from their prospective employers.

## Program Records

Maintaining adequate records and information about the program safeguards its continuity. Information should be on file and up-to-date so the program will continue seamlessly, whether or not the same teacher-coordinator or other program staff are in place from year to year. A program filing system should contain:

- Individual student folders;
- New student applications;
- Lists of, or sources for, prospective employers;
- Correspondence folders;
- Follow-up summaries;
- Reference material inventory;
- Student organization minutes;
- Advisory council minutes;
- Program budgets and reports;
- Related-course outline(s) or syllabus; and
- School and program forms.

With such records, program continuity can be maintained and current teacher-coordinators can be more organized. Schools and programs may wish to adopt policies for the length of time to keep program records, so they may be used to provide recommendations to graduating students or for other appropriate purposes.