



## Role and Function of the Teacher-Coordinator

Teacher-coordinators are the key to the success of any work-based learning program. Effective teacher-coordinators are self-starters able to plan their work, organize time, evaluate outcomes, and manage resources. Through the successful operation of a work-based learning program, teacher coordinators help students with varying occupational objectives to develop useful employment skills.

### Teacher-Coordinator Characteristics

To foster and coordinate the efforts of several kinds of people in different settings, and to influence others to achieve desired work-based learning goals, teacher-coordinators must demonstrate effective leadership abilities.

Teacher-coordinators are:

- Dependable and reliable.
- Proficient in establishing good interpersonal relations.
- Advocates for students.
- Efficient managers of time and resources.
- Effective communicators.
- Observant and insightful.
- Wise decision-makers.
- Innovative and creative.
- Responsible and self-disciplined.
- Continually updating their skills and growing as professionals.

### Responsibilities and Functions

Teacher-coordinators combine and coordinate efforts of many individuals to assure that work-based learning experiences effectively and efficiently help students develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and work habits so they can move successfully into the world of work. The functions and responsibilities of teacher-coordinators include program planning, development, and evaluation; related-class instruction; on-the-job instruction and coordination; guidance and advice; program administration and management; community and public relations; and development in their own professional role and activities. Following are descriptions of each area.

#### *Program Planning, Development, and Evaluation*

- Initiate and study the feasibility of a work-based learning program.
- Effectively use community resources.
- Develop objectives and responsibilities for the program.
- Include student self-knowledge exploration and planning in a team-oriented approach to career development, beginning as early as grades 6-8.
- Design the program to include continued improvement and re-evaluation.
- Work closely with school counselor(s).



## Related-Class Instruction

- Review and evaluate curriculum.
- Develop curriculum for both general-related and specific-related instruction; link efforts with other career and technical education staff to provide specific-related instruction.
- Consider special needs of disabled, at-risk, disadvantaged, and talented and gifted students.
- Develop outcome-based, measurable student objectives.
- Correlate classroom and on-the-job training.
- Use a variety of teaching methods and techniques, including team teaching.
- Use field trips, community facilities, and speakers to supplement classroom learning.
- Individualize instruction, as appropriate.
- Evaluate instruction and curriculum, using input from students, training sponsors, and advisory council members.

## *On-the-Job Instruction and Coordination*

- Evaluate, select, and establish [training stations](#).
- Inform [training sponsors](#) and parents of their role and responsibilities.
- Create, monitor, and adjust [training plans](#) in collaboration with the employer and student.
- Help training sponsors develop teaching techniques for working with students.
- Monitor student progress through regular on-site visits and on-going communication.
- Review state and federal labor and safety and health laws with the training station, sponsor, and student.
- Seek student evaluation of the training station.

## *Guidance and Advising*

- Advise potential program enrollees.
- Provide reference material for career information.
- Provide for special needs of [disabled](#), talented and gifted, [disadvantaged](#), and at-risk students.
- Help students develop good work habits.
- May sponsor and supervise work-based learning [student organizations](#) (See Career and Technical Student Organizations).
- Develop and coordinate work experiences that encourage nontraditional occupational opportunities.
- Recognize when students need counseling from other staff members and agencies.
- Help students determine ways to best describe their marketable skills.
- Assist graduating students with the various aspects of the job search.
- Write letters of recommendation for students.

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## *Program Administration and Management*

- Establish and use an [advisory council](#).
- Develop and file written [training plans and agreements](#).
- Know and assure compliance with relevant state and federal labor laws and regulations.
- Effectively manage resources including facilities, equipment, and supplies.
- Ensure student-learner safety and health protection.
- Maintain training station opportunities for [disabled](#), [disadvantaged](#), and at-risk students.

## *Program Evaluation*

- Prepare, administer, and analyze annual student and employer follow-up surveys.
- Seek evaluation from advisory council members.
- Prepare and analyze year-end reports.

## *Community and Public Relations*

- Use community resources to enrich work-based learning.
- Contact and use news media to publicize work-based learning student programs, events, projects, materials, proceedings of advisory council meetings, and related items.
- Create promotional materials for potential training stations and students.
- Visit previous and potential training stations to promote work-based learning.
- Use the resources of other agencies such as the Chamber of Commerce, Iowa Workforce Development, [Iowa STEM](#) Hub managers, regional [Intermediary networks](#), and trade unions.
- Develop and maintain a community personnel resource file.
- Represent work-based learning as a guest speaker at community and service clubs and organizations.
- Publicize meetings and activities of student organizations.
- Sponsor activities, such as open houses, service projects, recognition banquets, and field trips to various facilities.
- Maintain good communication and [public relations](#).
- Seek evaluation from the public.

## *Professional Role, Activities, and Development*

- Explain and champion the work-based learning philosophy, including the role of the teacher-coordinator.
- Maintain ethical standards.
- Foster a climate where staff members collaborate with other disciplines to provide broad student experiences.
- Serve and support professional organizations through leadership.
- Attend relevant professional seminars and workshops.
- Monitor professional literature.
- Contribute to and publish research through state and federal grant opportunities.

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- Acquire new occupational skills to keep pace with technological advances in the work-based learning field.
- Seek evaluation and feedback from administrators and peers.

Specific examples of teacher-coordinator activities include preparing students and training sponsors for job interviews; ensuring students are oriented to their jobs; and informing training sponsors of classroom activities. Teacher-coordinators may also provide guidance and serve as mediator for challenging student situations such as:

- Weaknesses or deficiencies leading to on-the-job difficulties.
- Conflicts caused by undesirable personal traits or habits.
- Suspicion of on-the-job theft.
- Excessive hours on the job interfering with other student activities.
- Multiple and conflicting on-the-job student supervisors.
- Impact of potential layoffs or reduction of employment hours on minimum program requirements.
- On-the-job safety and/or health hazards for students.
- Non-compliance with the [training plan](#) by students and/or employers.
- Transfers and/or replacement of [training sponsors](#) during the agreement period.
- Conflicts with workplace supervisors or co-workers.

Effective coordination requires a great deal of planning and effort, but it can be the most interesting and rewarding part of the job. When done well, students develop employment skills that otherwise would have been difficult to achieve. Every success confirms the need for the work-based learning program and the value of the teacher-coordinator.

## Professional Development

By keeping current with developments in work-based learning, teacher-coordinators can have the greatest positive effect on the quality of their programs. One way to foster professional growth and development is through membership in professional organizations related to work-based learning and cooperative education.

All teacher-coordinators should be members of the Iowa Association for Career and Technical Education ([IACTE](#)). Through its affiliation with the national Association for Career and Technical Education ([ACTE](#)), IACTE contributes to the growing national support for work-based learning.

In addition, each occupational area offers its own affiliations that contribute to the professional development of practitioners. By joining ACTE, IACTE, and the organizations representing their occupational specialties, teachers will be knowledgeable of best practices and industry trends and thus better equipped to serve students.

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In 2014, the organization formerly known as Iowa MOC Coordinators reorganized as the **Iowa Work-Based Learning Coordinators** organization. This group holds an annual meeting and conference for professionals to collaborate on best practices.

Challenging as it is, teacher-coordinators must also generate the same kind of effort and dedication to expertise in their professional specialty as they applied to meeting their original teaching qualifications. Because they must maintain credibility as they work with business leaders while continually improving their service to work-based learning students, teacher-coordinators need to actively pursue their own professional development.

Appropriate professional development activities may include:

- Completing courses, workshops, and seminars (including online courses) offered by higher education institutions.
- Reading professional literature to keep current on best practices.
- Participating in school-sponsored workshops and staff development seminars.
- Participating in summer employment to acquire related work experience.
- Participating in educator externships offered through many of the regional Intermediary networks.
- Participating in workshops and seminars sponsored by business and industry.

## Related Instruction: Development, Delivery, Evaluation

The most effective work-based learning combines classroom instruction with on-the-job instruction. The “classroom” part is known as [related instruction](#) and may be of two types: [general-related](#) and [specific-related](#) instruction.

General-related instruction covers topics important for all workers to know: safety, human relations, communications, labor law, taxes, economics, and others. Specific-related instruction, also known as technical, occupational, or job-related instruction, includes topics that make workers more proficient in one particular occupational area. For example, auto mechanic trainees are receiving specific-related instruction when learning about front-end alignment, automotive electrical systems, power trains, and exhaust systems. They are receiving general-related instruction when learning about safety, relationships on the job, managing money, and other topics that are valuable for all workers to know. In Iowa, at least 200 minutes per week of related instruction is recommended for secondary work-based learning programs.

### *Developing Related Instruction*

The most important characteristic of related instruction, particularly specific-related instruction, is that it should be individualized and correlated with on-the-job instruction. Many different occupations will be represented in the related instruction classroom, and even students training in the same occupation may be working in different functional areas. All types of related instruction should be based on student needs, occupational requirements, and the goals of the work-based learning program.

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The type of work-based learning program influences the nature of the related instruction. When planning a general-related curriculum, instructional units may include competencies in areas such as:

- Orientation to Work-Based Learning
- Leadership and Student Organizations
- Safety on the Job
- Developing Human Relations Skills
- Developing Communications Skills
- Understanding the Law
- Dealing with Stress and Conflict
- Job Related Math
- Taxation
- Entrepreneurship
- Developing Job Seeking Skills
- Consumer Economics and Skills

Topics for specific-related instruction are best identified in cooperation with the [training sponsor](#) when developing the [training plan](#). Specific-related instruction is most effective when delivered as close as possible to the time when trainees need the information on the job. In addition, excellent individualized curriculum guides have been developed for many occupations and are particularly helpful for teacher-coordinators who lack direct knowledge of the field. Teacher-coordinators should acquire the specific-related curriculum guides for occupations in which their students are placed.

Usually, general topics are presented at the beginning of the related class, and increasingly more specific related topics are presented as the class progresses. Be sure students understand what is expected of them, so they clearly know what it means to master the competencies.

Suggestions for organizing related instruction include:

- Use early class sessions to:
  - Cover orientation topics, such as special policies, regular activities, expectations, forms, required reports, etc.
  - Teach and emphasize safety and health.
  - Assure students understand the functions of the [student organization](#) and its relationship to classroom instruction.
- Include activities early in the term that develop camaraderie among students.
- Correlate on-the-job and classroom instruction.
- Search for logical order and applicability among topics.
- Organize curriculum and instruction to assure student success.
- Encourage students to work independently and responsibly within the specific occupational area.
- Consider interest and immediacy of student needs when structuring topics.
- Consider the calendar when sequencing topics (teaching taxes in January or February, for example).

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- Involve students in sequencing instruction.
- Decide the appropriate amount of time to devote to each topic.
- Be flexible when implementing planned instructional sequences.
- Infuse proper work attitudes early, often, and throughout all units.

## *Delivering Related Instruction*

During regular professional training programs, teacher-coordinators may learn instructional methods and techniques appropriate for related instruction. However, factors such as class content and on-the-job experiences can significantly influence the nature of related instruction.

Individualizing related instruction becomes imperative, particularly when students are working on separate topics. The teacher-coordinator is actually a classroom facilitator-manager who must use a wide variety of methods and techniques designed to meet the individual needs of each student.

Suggestions for delivering related instruction include:

- Avoid excessive use of the lecture method.
- Select a variety of teaching methods and techniques to address individual learning differences.
- Use community experts to present appropriate topics.
- Use instructional techniques that foster student self-esteem, independence, and responsibility.
- Integrate basic instruction, as needed, in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Correlate classroom instruction with on-the-job instruction.
- Experiment with new instructional techniques and methods.
- Consider student needs, on-the-job demands, and work-based learning goals when selecting appropriate teaching methods.

## *Evaluating Related Instruction*

Teacher-coordinators are responsible for evaluating student performance in related classes and submitting grades that represent student achievement. A reasonable approach to this task is to consider the two types of related instruction separately.

[General-related instruction](#) may be evaluated using traditional methods, including group testing at the end of specified units. However, [specific-related instruction](#) is best judged on an individual basis, by considering the amount of effort expended and the quality of each student's work.

The real measure of learning levels for each student is the attainment of specific [competencies](#), which should be verified by teacher-coordinators in cooperation with training sponsors. Clearly identifying competencies in the [training plan](#) is the key to student advancement and the relevant evaluation of student achievement.

Because all related instruction should enable students to achieve predetermined objectives or standards, evaluation of student performance should relate to assessing growth in meeting stated



competencies, objectives, standards, or outcomes rather than to the number of instructional units completed. Evaluation based on well-defined probability theories and normally-shaped curves of distribution may not be relevant to work-based learning. Given that job attitude is a primary determiner of on-the-job success, teacher-coordinators must become comfortable in subjectively grading student attitude by measuring attainment of competencies that indicate appropriate attitudes necessary for student job success and growth.

## Regular Coordination Visits to Training Stations and Site Sponsors

By regularly visiting worksites and observing student-trainees, teacher-coordinators can address potential difficulties, provide feedback and encouragement, and keep student-learners on track. Regular visits can also help improve and/or maintain the effectiveness of training stations. Some training sponsors may be adept at providing on-the-job instruction to student-trainees, while other sponsors may be unaware of effective techniques and will benefit from information by teacher-coordinator provided during regular visits. Consider the following guidelines:

- Conduct visits at convenient times for training sponsors and, preferably, when student-trainees are working, even if those times extend past the normal school day or hours.
- Initially schedule site visits with sponsors. Once rapport is established, teacher-coordinators may be able to visit worksites unannounced.
- Minimize disruption to the workplace and workforce.
- Visit each training station at least once a month, especially during the beginning weeks of student placement.
- Keep written documentation of training station visits to maintain accountability, continuity, and communication to student-trainees, parents, administrators, and employers.
- Ensure there is a purpose to each visit, such as:
  - correlating related instruction with on-the-job training;
  - coordinating training plans;
  - evaluating student progress;
  - resolving problems;
  - assessing the overall training environment; or
  - assisting the training sponsor with the training function.

Using their professional skills and enthusiasm for work-based learning, teacher-coordinators play critical roles in successfully resolving program challenges and maintaining good relationships with employers, students, schools, and their communities. Regular coordination visits are key to these relationships.