

Other Work Based Learning Options

Cooperative education is a proven instructional method with a long history in career and technical education programs. While the expectation is that students enrolled in Cooperative Career Education program will participate in the cooperative education component, the program may include other work based options to assist students with meeting the program curriculum standards. One or more of these options could be incorporated into Cooperative Career Education based on program design, student needs and interests, course scheduling requirements, or the availability of quality job placements in the community.

SCHOOL BASED ENTERPRISES

School based enterprises provide for the application of classroom learning and the acquisition of new skills in a workplace environment under the direct guidance and control of the school. For some students participating in a school based enterprise is their first work experience. For others it provides the opportunity to develop higher level skills in management, supervision and leadership. School based enterprises are new to many in education, but have been part of career and technical education programs for many years, particularly programs in Marketing Education.

School based enterprises are one optional component for work based learning. Students are actively engaged in the planning, development and operation of an actual business. While most school based enterprises are variations of the school store, other examples range from banks to ad agencies, floral shops to landscaping services, and restaurants to home catering businesses. Revenues generated from school based enterprises are used to support educational needs in the schools. Fund raising activities, when planned and conducted with student involvement and responsibilities, can be used as enterprises for learning when the activities are tied to learning and assessment of the curriculum standards.

School based enterprises can be a vital learning tool for Cooperative Career Education programs. School based enterprises can provide replication of the work world in a controlled environment when properly integrated into the curriculum. To reach the full potential of school based enterprises teachers need to ensure that they have student learning as their primary goal. The need to generate revenue can overshadow the learning value of the enterprise. When student participation is not carefully planned and monitored the enterprise can become another job responsibility for the teacher.

JOB SHADOWING

Job shadowing is a work based learning option where students learn about a career of interest by following a host employee through their work day. Job

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shadowing typically lasts one or two days per placement and is an unpaid experience for the student. Job shadowing allows the student to observe the workplace environment first hand. They see how occupational, academic, and employability skills are applied in the career area, and the value of preparation for careers. Students observe a variety of tasks without actually being involved in any hands on activities.

Job shadowing can be an effective work based learning option for Cooperative Career Education programs, particularly for students who are still exploring career interests. This effectiveness can be enhanced by careful planning of the job shadowing experience. A host employee should be identified by the company and briefed on the purpose of the visit and agenda for the day. Students should prepare a list of questions for the host, guided by research on the occupational area and teacher suggestions. Tours of the company should be an early part of the experience so that students have a broad understanding of the context for the roles and responsibilities of the host employee. Host employees should include their own education preparation and the continuing educational requirements as part of the explanation of their job. Teachers should include a summary assignment for the student to stimulate their analysis and synthesis of the job shadowing experience.

Job shadowing should be considered a prerequisite or supplemental activity for students enrolled in Cooperative Career Education programs. The purpose of such activities in these programs is to better prepare students for the cooperative education experience. As such they are another tool available to the teacher in designing a quality program.

SHORT TERM INTERNSHIPS

Internships have many of the same characteristics as cooperative education but several differences. Internships may or may not be paid work experiences. Internships generally have goals of experience in the career area and the application of learned skills in a work environment rather than the development of new skills. Internships are most often viewed as culminating activities after completion of a course of study. Even with these differences, the term internship is increasingly being applied to the cooperative education experience because it is a term commonly associated with workplace learning as part of a school program.

Internships provide directed learning experiences in actual job experiences. Students learn the requirements of the career area and how the knowledge and skills they have learned in school are applied on the job. Students gain work experiences which assist them with the transition to full time work and refinement of career goals for further education. Students make connections with people in the work world who can provide recommendations and career assistance.

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Businesses get the opportunity to screen interns for future employment and use the internship process as a recruiting tool for future employees.

Short term internships can be an important work based learning option for Cooperative Career Education programs. Short term is defined as placement of nine weeks or less. Placement of longer than nine weeks raises questions about issues regarding the employment relationship between student and training station, liability, and compliance with program operational policies. The short term nature of the placement is more adaptable to the varied demands of a student's class schedule, graduation requirements, and other school related activities. A student could participate in several internships in a variety of businesses during the school year.

The requirements for conducting a quality internship experience are much the same as those required for cooperative education. There should be a written agreement with responsibilities and expectations clearly listed for all parties. The teacher in cooperation with the business and student should develop a list of job duties and responsibilities the student will assume during the internship experience. These should be correlated to the program curriculum standards. There should be a process in place to assess the student's internship experience and for the student to reflect on the contributions the experience made to their career preparation.

Cooperative Career Education teacher-coordinators and curriculum developers should consider these and other work based learning options when designing quality, effective programs with enough flexibility in delivery methods to meet the needs of students, the school and the community.