

Experiential Learning Opportunities and Definitions

Experiential Learning Opportunities



Experiential Learning Definitions

There are many different delivery models for experiential learning. These definitions briefly describe some experiential learning opportunities that are occurring throughout Minnesota in K-12.

Career Exposure Experiences

Expert Presenters from community organizations or institutions, business and industry, and postsecondary institutions visit classrooms and share information about their careers or areas of expertise, educational background and personal choices that both prepared and facilitate their career success.

Tours and Field Trips engage students to explore the knowledge and skills of different occupations within an industry cluster and develop basic awareness of employability skills in a number of different departments or employers, and career fields.

Entrepreneurship provides students with a model and may offer opportunities to take leadership roles that demonstrate initiative, innovation, and ownership to organize and operate their own businesses or projects in an alternative work program or as a part of course requirements.

Work Readiness Experiences

Community-Based Learning experiences are activities not necessarily connected to education and may involve activities such as: job shadowing, work site visits or field trips, work in a business or management of a business, participation in a club or organization based enterprise, work in and/or operation of a school based enterprise. These experiences may require a licensed educator to supervise the activity, depending on the connection to a school-based program.

Work-Based Learning (WBL) programs are approved by the Minnesota Department of Education. WBL students, if they are enrolled in a cooperative WBL experience, internship, or youth apprenticeship, must be supervised by a licensed WBL teacher in a state approved WBL program. These programs describe learning which occurs outside of the classroom at a location (where goods or services are produced.) It involves learning experiences and activities that include actual paid or unpaid work experience such as structured cooperative work experiences, internships, and youth apprenticeship.

Career Exploration Experiences

Job Shadowing is a short-term experience that is intended to help students explore a range of career objectives and begin to identify a career field or pathway and to start toward a career plan. In job shadowing, students make brief worksite visits to spend time with individual workers learning what knowledge, skills and education their jobs entail. The length of the job shadowing experience is based on individual career objectives designed and agreed to by the participating business or industry, student, teacher, and parent.

Service Learning is a form of experiential learning whereby students apply content knowledge, critical thinking and good judgment to address genuine community needs. Service learning is a way of teaching and learning that

engages all learners in hands-on projects in the community to meet learning objectives and mutually benefit both the student as well as strengthen communities. For example, students in high school career and technical education (CTE) classroom may take samples from an area lake and examine them for information that could be useful to a local pollution control agency in addressing environmental issues.

Internships are usually short-term work experiences but can last 40 hours or more. Internships extend a career field or pathway beyond the classroom to outside the school, or that help a job-seeker reach their career goal through building experience. Internships generally involve participants working in professional settings under the supervision and monitoring of practicing professionals. Internships can be paid or unpaid, and they may or may not involve academic credit. Strong internship programs will provide substantial, meaningful work assignments, training, necessary workspace as well as resources, structured evaluation and reflection.

In secondary education, students can explore and gain experience in a specific occupation and acquire new skills or explore different aspects of a career field or pathway under an internship. As an “extension” of what a student has learned, internships have specific objectives to be reached which augment a career and technical education program and academic coursework. Internships are generally offered to 11th and 12th graders. The length of the internship is based on individual objectives that need to be defined in the agreement between the business/employer and the school. Students participating in internships must be supervised by a licensed work-based learning teacher. This type of agreement involves a written document and training plan between school, employer, student, and parent.

Cooperative Education (co-op) provides students with work experiences related to the student’s major, career field or pathway goal. The typical program plan is for students to utilize both classroom study and discipline-related employment, thus gaining a year or more of career-related work experience before graduation. These co-op positions are either non-paid or paid and the vast majority involves some form of academic credit. This type of agreement involves a written document and training plan between school, employer, student, and parent.

Career Readiness Experiences and Programs

Mentoring is a professional relationship in which an experienced person (mentor) assists another (mentee) in developing skills and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person’s professional and personal growth. Mentoring can be used for both personal and professional development. For youth, mentoring can provide positive role models and help with career exploration. For adults, mentoring can provide insight into how to effectively navigate a career or workplace. Mentoring may take place in a short-term structured program or it may be a lifelong relationship and may be done through an eMentoring delivery system.

Youth Apprenticeship is approved by the Office of Career and College Success at the Minnesota Department of Education. Youth Apprenticeships are paid experiences for 11th and 12th grade students. The Youth Apprenticeship does require a written agreement and training plan between school, employer, student, and parent/guardian and is governed by an industry recognized checklist. In some instances, Youth Apprenticeships provide postsecondary credit and/or credentials. Youth Apprenticeship students must be supervised by a licensed WBL teacher in a state approved program.

Pre-Apprenticeship programs are designed to prepare individuals to enter and succeed in a Registered Apprenticeship program. Typically, these programs will include both workplace skills development as well as foundational work for specific occupational competencies such as applied mathematics, tool and equipment recognition, and safety training.