WORK-BASED
LEARNING

SYSTEM
DEVELOPMENT
GOALS
TOOL

A Tool for K-12 Districts from the
Work-Based Learning Demonstration Project

September 2017

JOBS FOR THE FUTURE

WHY DO WE RECOMMEND GOALS SPECIFIC TO WORK-BASED LEARNING?

Clear, specific goals are critical to the effectiveness of any learning organization. When done right, goals motivate people and provide visible targets for success. Most career pathway programs include work-based learning (WBL), but may not have detailed goals specific to this important piece of a pathway. For educators seeking to advance their WBL programs, there are several tangible ways that WBL goals help propel the work:

- Drafting written goals helps us clarify what we mean when we use terms like "career readiness" and "internships."

- Approving goals helps us reach agreement and make commitments to each other and to students.

- Communicating goals helps us build support among stakeholders and remain accountable.

- Implementing goals is where the rubber hits the road—goals help us make decisions about how we use our time and resources to build systems, programs, and experiences for students.

- Monitoring goals helps us assess where we are right now in relation to where we want to be.

- Revising goals helps us to adjust our targets and recommit to our core purposes in the work.

This tool is designed to help school districts create and use WBL goals to grow their capacity in providing high-quality WBL programming for their students. The numbered steps below represent a suggested process that leaders can follow to leverage the power of WBL goals—one that ultimately serves as an ongoing improvement cycle for WBL.

First, it's helpful to first understand different levels in the organization in which goals are typically created. To simplify, consider two basic levels of WBL goals: system-level goals and student-level goals.

SYSTEM-LEVEL WBL GOALS: WHAT ARE THEY?

System-level WBL goals are objectives for the academy, school, district, and local and regional partners that operate as targets for the programs offered at each of those levels. They essentially say what the staff and administrators are going to do for students in terms of creating WBL opportunities.

System-level goals:

- Often apply to an entire school, district, and/or local and regional sets of partners

- Identify roles and responsibilities for district staff and intermediary, business, and regional partners

- Focus on what the pathway, school, or district and its local and regional partners will commit to in terms of WBL programs and supports

- Set both long- and short-term targets for the system that will be built or developed

- May include growth targets that reflect expanding specific opportunities for students

- Help decision makers direct resources and set policies

- May cover a wide range of system-related topics such as governance, decision-making processes, capacity, curriculum alignment, communication, and metrics and reporting

- Should be included in key strategic documents such as the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) to ensure proper funding and accountability[1]

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1. The LCAP is a document required by the State of California's Department of Education that details school districts' budget priorities.

SYSTEM-LEVEL GOAL EXAMPLES

The Central School District will develop a WBL system that features:

- A written K-12 progression of experiences that grows from career awareness, to career exploration, to career preparation and training

- WBL opportunities that are open to every student, regardless of their program enrollment or prior achievement

- Direct involvement from at least 100 employer partners in our local business community

- District- and site-level staff dedicated to program implementation and assessment

- An intermediary organization responsible for employer engagement and coordination of WBL experiences with employers

- Active participation from advisory board members, teachers, counselors, administrators, and partner organizations with clear roles and responsibilities

By 2020, Midtown District will expand its existing WBL system to ensure that:

- All career academies offer two to three WBL opportunities per grade level per year

- The percentage of seniors completing internships grows from 20 to 50 percent

- Each high school site employs one full-time WBL coordinator

- The Senior Exhibition requirement includes an explicit WBL component

- WBL experiences are increased across the WBL Continuum by 25 percent in the 2017-18 school year

- WBL is specified in the graduate profile

Before setting WBL system goals, it may be helpful to conduct an assessment of your current WBL system using JFF's Work-Based Learning Development Assessment Tool in order to identify where system improvements need to be made.

STUDENT-LEVEL WBL GOALS: WHAT ARE THEY?

Student-level WBL goals are objectives for students to meet at specific times in their educational careers. They articulate what students are going to accomplish in terms of WBL achievement.

Student-level goals:

- May apply to all students within an academy, pathway, or school district

- Focus on what individual students will do or learn during WBL experiences

- Set specific targets for what every successful academy completer or school graduate will accomplish related to WBL

- Help decision makers direct resources and set policies

- Help guide teachers' instructional decisions, including project and lesson design

- Can be included in key strategic documents such as the LCAP for accountability

STUDENT-LEVEL GOAL EXAMPLES

All members of the engineering pathway will:

- Complete a career exploration project with a score of proficient or higher (grade 9)

- Conduct two job-shadowing experiences and submit required reflections (grade 10)

- Participate in a mock interview and prepare a professional resume (grade 11)

- Successfully complete a minimum of 40 hours of internship experience (grade 12)

- Demonstrate all six of the engineering pathway's career-ready skills through the successful completion of a senior defense presentation (prior to graduation)

All students at Riverview High School will:

- Complete and annually update a four-year course plan that includes quarterly WBL benchmarks

- Complete and submit at least three part-time employment applications by the fall of grade 12

- Successfully obtain at least four different microcredentials that demonstrate discrete skills from their elective courses

- Attend at least one brown-bag lunch with guest speakers from the school's employer partner community each semester and submit reflections on one of these events each year

PROCESS OF CREATING AND USING WORK-BASED LEARNING GOALS

1 DRAFT

2 APPROVE

3 COMMUNICATE

4 IMPLEMENT

5 MONITOR

6 REVISE
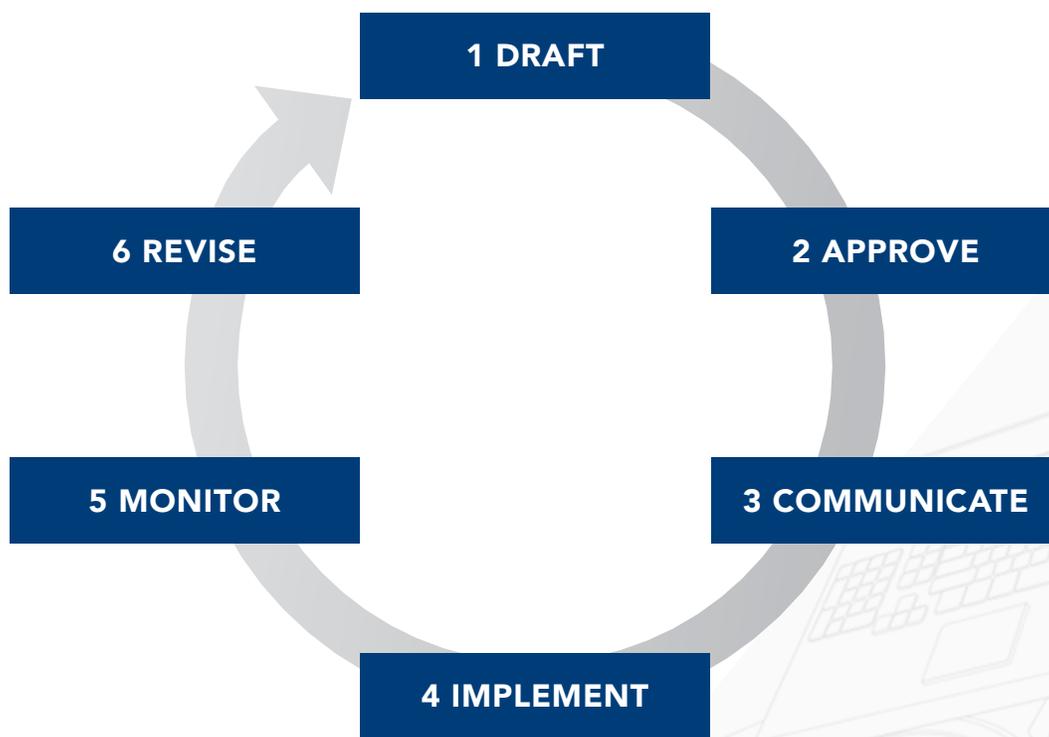
1 ▶ DRAFTING WBL GOALS

The initial drafting of written WBL goals can be a daunting task. Questions immediately arise: Who should write the goals? How many goals are needed? Who are they for? How specific should they be?

Most districts will benefit from drafting an aligned set of both system- and student-level targets, as described above. It may make sense for system-level goals to live primarily at the district level, driving key policies and resources, while student-level goals are held, implemented, and monitored at the school or pathway level by teachers and WBL support staff.

Key tasks in the drafting phase of the work include:

Team formation
Create a small, cross-level team of interested individuals who can help shape the initial draft of goals. With both system- and student-level goals in mind, include representatives from the district office as well as from pathway classrooms. If possible, employer and intermediary partners should be included as well. Once members have been recruited, gather to set some ground rules and clarify the team's task.

Team knowledge building
Before drafting goals, review best practices in the field of WBL as a team in order to ensure that everyone is up to speed on the topic. In addition to this document, great resources to review together include the following:

RESOURCES FOR BUILDING WBL EXPERTISE

Making Work-Based Learning Work. This paper guides the design and implementation of effective models of WBL that expand access for the many people who don't currently benefit from these opportunities, including the introduction of seven principles for effective WBL that JFF has identified. http://www.jff.org/publications/making-work-based-learning-work

Work-Based Learning in Linked Learning: Definitions, Outcomes, and Quality Criteria. Developed by the Linked Learning Alliance's WBL Subcommittee in 2012, this document provides much-needed clarity to the field regarding key terminology and features of high-quality WBL. https://goo.gl/UPjdLd

CCASN's WBL Toolbox. University of California, Berkeley's College and Career Academy Support Network maintains this outstanding online repository of WBL implementation tools, with over 40 downloadable documents that range from job shadow consent forms to internship evaluation questions—and everything in between. http://casn.berkeley.edu/resources.php?c=7

Work-Based Learning in California: Opportunities and Models for Expansion. WestEd's 2009 research report provides an outstanding overview of the whys and whats of WBL. Also included are examples of effective WBL and a thoughtful discussion of what is needed to expand it in the future. https://www.wested.org/online_pubs/workbasedlearning.pdf

Education Policy Improvement Center Resources on College and Career Readiness. EPIC, a nonprofit consulting team founded by the University of Oregon's Dr. David Conley, produces excellent resources that dive into research around what it means to be "college and career ready." https://goo.gl/7AViv6

Drafting and revising: With the team in place and prepared, it's time to write. We recommend using an iterative writing process that includes individual brainstorming followed by partner work and whole-group sharing. Consolidate and revise the work before moving on to the next steps.

2 ▶ APPROVING WBL GOALS

Approving WBL goals involves more than securing a favorable vote from the school board. This stage in the process can build momentum for expanding WBL in the district by inviting stakeholder groups to weigh in on draft goals. Share WBL goal drafts with students, staff, pathways, partners, site leaders, intermediary partners, business partners, and district officials. Some districts will want to facilitate meetings with different stakeholder groups. For example, pathway advisory board groups can provide a helpful perspective on the work. In other settings, a meeting that combines representatives from multiple groups will work best. Either way, this step is a great opportunity to build momentum and get a serious conversation going about what WBL is and how it can help ensure that all students are ready for college and career.

After seeking input and revising the draft goals, we recommend that districts formally adopt the goals. Committing to the goals through the official approval of the board of trustees and/or other key governance bodies not only signals the importance of this work, but it also establishes a framework for resource allocation and accountability.

3 ▶ COMMUNICATING WBL GOALS

Approved WBL goals need to be shared with stakeholder groups—especially those that participated in the feedback and revision process above. Pathway teachers and site administrators who are on the front lines of implementation need to understand the targets. Students and parents will need to understand student-level goals, and schools will need to be ready to discuss the programs and supports in place to help students reach the goals.

Communicating WBL goals is not a one-time event. Districts that are serious about following through on their goals understand the critical role of communications and take advantage of every opportunity to share their goals publicly.

Ideally, WBL goals are shared…

- In prominent, easy-to-find places on the district website
- In tandem with the district vision, mission, and graduate profile
- Verbally by the superintendent and school board as recurring "talking points"

- Verbally by site administrators and pathway teachers as expectations for all students
- With all employer partners who engage with district pathways
- With intermediary organizations who help support WBL efforts
- Will all vendors who do business with the district
- With all parents in district and site newsletters, and at "back-to-school" events
- With students when they meet with their academic counselor
- In school and pathway recruiting materials
- With community leaders as a challenge to support the district efforts
- With LCAP (or other key district document) writing teams so that the LCAP can be aligned to support WBL goals

4 IMPLEMENTING WBL GOALS

If WBL goals are to mean anything to a district, they must be acted upon. Implementing goals is where the real work begins: ensuring everyone in the organization understands the implications of the goals, aligning resources and processes, creating new systems, and transforming the current reality to reflect the new WBL targets.

A thorough discussion of WBL implementation is beyond the scope of this tool. However, we will mention that as implementation work is taking place, it is important to continue communicating the goals (Step 3, previous page) and monitoring your progress (Step 5, below). JFF's Ideas Bank for WBL and Work-Based Learning Development Assessment Tool may be useful here as well.

5 MONITORING WBL GOALS

It is often said that organizations "measure what matters." If WBL goals truly matter, and if they are to act as a living tool to leverage growth, then it is imperative that districts keep track of their progress. This involves actions such as:

- Identifying tangible progress indicators (this can be done during the goal-drafting step)

- Assigning someone to oversee data collection, organization, and sharing

- Ensuring that the proper data is collected throughout the year

- Scheduling explicit times for site and district leaders to analyze data and discuss progress toward the goals

Districts that are relatively new to WBL may lack the tools, protocols, and systems to collect accurate data related to their WBL goals. Setting up a WBL data system might be a great first-step goal! If your district lacks in-house solutions for managing WBL data, collaborate with other districts and intermediary organizations to find out how others are solving this challenging aspect of WBL growth. JFF's Work-Based Learning Inventory Tool may be useful as a starting place for tracking WBL experiences for students.

6 REVISING WBL GOALS

Over time, in the normal course of implementing district WBL goals, a number of things are likely to happen:

- Some goals will be met completely;

- Some goals will be met partially;

- Some goals will shift as a result of changes in district programs; and/or

- New WBL priorities will emerge that are not reflected in existing goals.

The final step in the WBL goals process is to revise the goals. While some districts may choose to revise goals annually, others will revisit them every two or three years. The key is to stay committed to the process.

This step ultimately sends districts back to the starting point. Revising goals requires a review and rewriting process that mirrors the "Step 1: Drafting WBL Goals" portion of this tool, although the work is done with a much greater understanding of where the district has been and where it is going with its WBL efforts.

DESIGN TOOL: DRAFTING WBL GOALS

SYSTEM-LEVEL GOALS

Questions for discussion:

1. How does our district define "college and career readiness?" What evidence would we see from a student who achieved this? How can WBL help?

2. Does providing WBL for our students help achieve other district priorities? If so, how? How can this be communicated to other key district staff?

3. What would the ideal WBL system look like for your district/school/pathway?

4. How much growth is needed to get to the ideal WBL system?

5. What are some ambitious yet reasonable numerical targets for WBL growth?

6. What staffing will be needed to support the ideal WBL system?

7. What program additions will be needed for the ideal WBL system?

8. What tangible steps can the district commit to at this point?

9. What is an ambitious yet reasonable timeline for these changes?

DRAFT SYSTEM-LEVEL GOALS:

DESIGN TOOL: DRAFTING WBL GOALS

STUDENT-LEVEL GOALS

Questions for discussion:

1. Will the district expect the same level of WBL achievement from all students?

2. What evidence should we see from a student who is career ready?

3. What baseline level of experiences or achievements should all students reach in terms of WBL?

4. How can we best scaffold WBL experiences across grades 9 through 12?

5. Can pathways, schools, and the district provide programs to support these experiences?

6. How do we ensure that WBL is implemented as a curricular activity (and not extracurricular, even if it happens outside of school hours)?

DRAFT STUDENT-LEVEL GOALS: