

From Classroom to Career: Work-Based Learning for Indiana's Students

A student's career path can have lifelong impacts on their future earnings, social mobility, and job satisfaction. Yet today's rapidly changing career landscape can make choosing a future career a challenge. Work-based learning enables students to explore high-wage and in-demand careers in real-world settings while building skills to navigate the changing economy. In line with Indiana's education and economic priorities, [Regional Educational Laboratory \(REL\) Midwest](#) developed this documentary to showcase the value of work-based learning, the evidence base supporting it, and the innovative strategies Indiana districts are using to strengthen their programs and offerings.



"As [students] are exposed to more opportunities in their community, it helps them to believe in what they can be in the future—to understand all of the different types of jobs that exist in the community. And for those students who . . . maybe just haven't had the same kinds of opportunities made available to them for one reason or another, a really great work-based learning program changes that for them."

— Marie Mackintosh
President and CEO, EmployIndy

About the documentary

This 30-minute public television program, developed by the REL Midwest [Employability Skills partnership](#) and produced with Ball State PBS, spotlights three models of work-based learning at different Indiana high schools—two rural and one urban. In the program, educators, students, and leaders share their experiences and lessons learned with these programs. They also discuss practices to increase participation, expand opportunities aligned to industry needs, and support students' career aspirations.

The documentary features an engineering internship program at Perry Central Community Schools; the Bulldog Manufacturing school-based enterprise with the Collaboration of Shoals, Mitchell, and Orleans Schools (COSMOS); and an accounting apprenticeship at Indianapolis Public Schools through EmployIndy's Modern Apprenticeship Program. The documentary also includes expert commentary from Dr. Katherine Hughes, a principal researcher at the American Institutes for Research (AIR); Anthony Harl, state director of Career and Technical Education (CTE) at the Indiana Commission for Higher Education; and Dr. Todd Hurst, senior vice president, Institute for Workforce Excellence at the Indiana Chamber of Commerce.



Scan the QR code
to watch the
documentary

Documentary overview

- **1:41:** What Is Work-Based Learning, and Why Is It Important for Indiana?
- **4:17:** Spotlight on Internships: Perry Central Junior-Senior High School and Thermwood Corporation
- **11:56:** Spotlight on Apprenticeships: EmployIndy and Indianapolis Public Schools
- **17:29:** Spotlight on School-Based Enterprises: Collaboration of Shoals, Mitchell, and Orleans Schools (COSMOS)
- **21:50:** Considerations for Expanding Opportunities in Indiana



Intended audience

REL Midwest created this documentary to build awareness about the value of work-based learning among students, families, educators, business leaders, and community members. The documentary also may serve as a resource for school and district leaders, work-based learning coordinators, and teachers to explore strategies for strengthening work-based learning, including increasing student participation and partnering with employers and intermediaries to expand offerings. Although the program focuses on Indiana, the strategies are relevant for educators across the country.



Discussion questions

- ▶ What was your reaction to this video? What parts of the video resonate most with you and why?
- ▶ The video mentions the continuum of work-based learning experiences, from career awareness and exploration to more immersive experiences to support career preparation and training. What actions can your school or district take to expand the range of work based learning experiences offered to students?
- ▶ Education leaders in Indiana are working to expand access to high-quality work-based learning capstone experiences, such as internships, apprenticeships, and school-based enterprises. What are some steps your district or school can take to expand access to and participation in these types of experiences?
- ▶ How do the strategies featured in the video align with the goals of your school or district related to work-based learning? How can school and district leaders incorporate these strategies into their strategic planning?
- ▶ What challenges does your school or district face related to implementing and expanding work-based learning? How might the strategies presented in the video help you address those challenges? What next steps do you need to take to apply those strategies?
- ▶ The video describes the concept in youth development research known as possible selves, which refers to how young people visualize how they think about what's possible for them in their future careers and lives. How can you help students expand the possible selves they visualize for their futures?
- ▶ What are your hopes for your students who participate in work-based learning? What actions can you take to help bring those hopes to fruition?

About REL Midwest

REL Midwest is part of a network of 10 regional educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences. REL Midwest works in partnership with practitioners in seven Midwest states to conduct applied research and provide training, coaching, and technical support to create a more evidence-based education system.

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