NEW MEXICO
Public Education Department
College and Career Readiness

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State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work

New Mexico Work-Based Learning Framework

NEW MEXICO WORK-BASED LEARNING TOOLKIT

PART 1

The ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Framework*** establishes a shared statewide vision, expectations, and roles and responsibilities to support high-quality, equitable work-based learning (WBL) opportunities for students across the state. The framework is designed to ensure consistency and alignment with state law while preserving local flexibility to respond to regional workforce needs, community strengths, and student interests.

The purpose of the statewide WBL framework is to:

- Ensure that all students have access to meaningful, high-quality WBL experiences that connect classroom learning to real-world application.
- Promote equitable access to WBL across geographies, student populations, and programs of study.
- Provide clarity and consistency for school districts, charter schools, and partners implementing WBL.
- Support student transitions to postsecondary education; advanced training; and high-skill, high-wage, and in-demand careers.
- Strengthen partnerships among schools, employers, and communities.

Through this framework, New Mexico envisions WBL as a continuum of experiences that deepen over time—moving from awareness and exploration to preparation and entry—positioning students as active participants in their education and programs of study.

NEW MEXICO'S VISION FOR WBL

New Mexico envisions a robust, career-connected education foundation that guides and supports students from primary through secondary and postsecondary education.[1] This system integrates academic knowledge, technical skills, and Career Technical Education to prepare students for continued education and the modern workforce.

DEFINING WBL

WBL in New Mexico is an instructional experience that:

- Occurs in connection with a workplace.
- Is aligned to state academic content and performance standards.
- Is intentionally designed with learning objectives and structured supervision.
- Should be included in a student's Next Step Plan.
- May count toward required academic credit, program of study concentrations, and/or elective units for graduation, in accordance with New Mexico law and the ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Academic Credit and Graduation Alignment Guide***.

WBL experiences vary in intensity, duration, and setting, but all must prioritize learning outcomes, student safety, and meaningful engagement with career-relevant skills.

1 New Mexico Public Education Department, https://web.ped.nm.gov/bureaus/college-and-career-readiness-bureau/.

ISSUING CORE ACADEMIC CREDIT FOR WBL

WBL courses approved by the New Mexico Public Education Department (PED) may satisfy graduation requirements in English, mathematics, science, or electives when the experience includes structured learning aligned to the corresponding academic content standards. PED-led approval ensures that WBL courses meet consistent expectations for academic rigor, quality, and student safety. PED approval applies to WBL courses that award academic credit, not to individual work placements.

Issuing core academic credit for WBL experiences requires thorough alignment between the WBL opportunity and academic content standards, meaningful assessment by a core content-area teacher who leverages their expertise, and comprehensive documentation demonstrating students' competency in the academic content area.

Local districts retain responsibility for identifying employer partners, coordinating student placements, and managing day-to-day WBL implementation. However, school districts and charter schools are encouraged to work with the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (NMDWS) and the local workforce development board as needed. The PED offers guidance on the overall structure and expectations for WBL to meet statewide standards. Find additional information and guidance on issuing core academic credit for WBL in the ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Academic Credit and Graduation Alignment Guide***.

GOVERNANCE AND SYSTEM ROLES ACROSS WBL EXPERIENCES

In addition to the PED, regional intermediaries, school districts, charter schools, and others have distinct roles and responsibilities in supporting WBL implementation. The following guidance identifies the roles and responsibilities of key partners working across New Mexico's career-connected education system.

PED

- Establishes statewide definitions, standards, and expectations for WBL.
- Determines criteria for PED approval of WBL courses.
- Issues guidance, tools, and templates to support districts and partners.
- Monitors compliance with state graduation requirements and WBL policies.

NMDWS

- Aligns WBL efforts with statewide workforce priorities, including high-demand and high-growth industry sectors.
- Provides labor market information and workforce data to inform WBL experience design, program of study alignment, and regional decision making.
- Administers key workforce programs that intersect with WBL, including local Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) youth funding to support student access to employment and training opportunities.
- Supports and expands apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship experiences through employment services, including connections to registered and emerging apprenticeship models.
- Houses and coordinates service opportunities such as AmeriCorps New Mexico programs through Serve New Mexico, which can provide structured, skill-building experiences aligned with students' programs of study.
- Pilots and supports employer-driven models such as matched-funding internships to increase the availability of paid WBL opportunities.

- Partners with the PED and regional intermediaries to connect employers to schools and scale participation in WBL experiences.
- Supports local workforce boards and partners in approving and implementing WBL-aligned activities, particularly through WIOA-funded programs.
- Contributes to building a coordinated, cross-system approach to WBL that prioritizes access and participation alongside alignment to workforce needs.

Regional Intermediaries

- Facilitate partnerships between schools and employers.
- Support coordination of workplace experiences.
- Provide technical assistance to school districts and charter schools in developing WBL experiences.
- Support regional workforce alignment and industry engagement.
- Help ensure equitable access to WBL opportunities across communities.

School Districts and Charter Schools

- Ensure that WBL experiences align with New Mexico academic content standards, performance standards, course objectives, and WBL expectations.
- Develop structured learning plans to connect classroom instruction and workplace learning.
- Ensure appropriate supervision, evaluation, and documentation of student learning in WBL experiences.
- Maintain student safety, labor law compliance, and risk management.
- Provide professional development and training to educators/teachers, counselors, and administrators on WBL practices.
- Prepare students for WBL participation, including establishing career goals; workplace expectations; and safety, communication, attendance, confidentiality, and reflection requirements.
- Verify applicable federal, state, local, Tribal, and employer-specific requirements related to student safety, supervision, transportation, liability, workers' compensation, child labor laws, and nondiscrimination before placing students in workplace settings.

Tribal and Pueblo Leadership

- Provides guidance to ensure that WBL experiences are culturally responsive and aligned with community values and priorities.
- Partners with schools and intermediaries to design and implement WBL opportunities that reflect local economic and workforce needs.
- Supports access to WBL opportunities for Native American students within Tribal communities.
- Helps identify and engage local employers, Tribal enterprises, and community-based organizations as WBL partners.
- Advises on protocols, permissions, and considerations when implementing WBL experiences within Tribal lands and communities.
- Promotes integration of Indigenous knowledge, language, and perspectives into career-connected learning.

Employer and Community Partners

- Provide authentic workplace experiences aligned with programs of study.
- Collaborate with educators to support learning objectives.
- Provide supervision, mentorship, and feedback to students on their demonstration of technical skills and career-ready practices.
- Maintain safe and appropriate workplace environments for students.
- Participate in orientation or planning before hosting students.
- Help define learning objectives connected to the student's program of study, coursework, or academic content standards.
- Communicate concerns promptly to the school district or charter school partner.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR WBL

All WBL experiences in New Mexico should be grounded in the following principles:

Equity: WBL opportunities are accessible to all students, including students who are Native American, English language learners, students with disabilities, and students who are economically disadvantaged.[2]

Access: Systems are designed to remove barriers to WBL participation, including transportation, scheduling, compensation, eligibility, awareness, etc.

Quality: WBL experiences are structured, supervised, and aligned to learning objectives, academic content standards, and programs of study.

Adaptability: School districts and charter schools design and implement WBL experiences that reflect local context, industry needs, and community strengths while meeting statewide expectations.

2 New Mexico Public Education Department: Martinez/Yazzie Action Plan, https://web.ped.nm.gov/martinez-yazzie-action-plan/.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING WBL

School districts and charter schools across New Mexico may be at different phases of implementing WBL. Some may already have established structures in place; others may be just beginning to implement high-quality experiences. Regardless of the starting point, school districts and charter schools are encouraged to adopt a phased approach, allowing time to build partnerships, align WBL experiences with academic requirements, and expand access for students. The following considerations provide a general roadmap for school districts and charter schools that are developing or strengthening WBL opportunities. Full WBL implementation guidance, strategies, templates, and tools are available in the ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Quality, Evidence, and Readiness Guide***, which provides tools for assessing readiness, documenting experiences, and ensuring quality.

PHASES OF NEW MEXICO WORK-BASED LEARNING IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE I: EXPLORATION AND PLANNING

Establish foundational conditions for high-quality WBL experiences and develop a shared understanding of opportunities and actions for initial implementation or improvement.

- Recruit and engage employers, workforce partners, and community organizations to build partnerships and define shared goals, roles, and expectations.
- Identify high-quality WBL experiences and connect them to existing programs of study.
- Review graduation requirements and identify opportunities to award credit for WBL.

PHASE II: INITIAL IMPLEMENTATION

Offer structured WBL opportunities connected to programs of study and academic learning to test and refine WBL systems while building trust and confidence among educators, employers, students, and the community.

- Launch or expand pilot WBL experiences in selected schools or programs of study.
- Establish processes for student placement, supervision, and communication with employers.
- Align WBL experiences with academic content standards and course objectives.
- Document student participation and learning outcomes.

PHASE III: EXPANSION AND INTEGRATION

Expand WBL opportunities to reach more students and programs of study, and embed real-world work experiences as a sustained and integrated component of the career-connected education system.

- Regularly review WBL participation, completion, student feedback, employer feedback, credit attainment, program of study alignment, and postsecondary or employment outcomes to improve quality and equity.
- Expand employer partnerships across additional industries.
- Increase the number and types of WBL experiences available to students.
- Integrate WBL opportunities across multiple grade levels and programs of study.
- Strengthen systems for WBL coordination, quality monitoring, and continuous improvement.

USING THE *NEW MEXICO WORK-BASED LEARNING TOOLKIT* TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

The *New Mexico Work-Based Learning Framework* defines the vision and purpose of WBL in New Mexico and is one component of the *New Mexico Work-Based Learning Toolkit*. The resources within the *New Mexico Work-Based Learning Toolkit* are designed to support schools in implementing WBL:

- The ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Continuum and Progression Guide*** demonstrates how WBL opportunities develop across grade levels.
- The ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Academic Credit and Graduation Alignment Guide*** explains how WBL experiences may count toward graduation requirements.
- The ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Quality, Evidence, and Readiness Guide*** provides tools for assessing readiness, documenting experiences, and ensuring quality.
- The ***New Mexico Work-Based Learning Outreach and Engagement Resources*** provide communication tools to help school districts and charter schools engage students and families, as well as employers.

Together, these resources support the development of sustainable, equitable, and high-quality WBL systems across New Mexico. All resources are housed on the **New Mexico Work-Based Learning website**.

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