

Key Messages: Work-Based Learning

Communicating the Value of Work-Based Learning to Students and Partners

Using consistent, audience-specific messages about work-based learning helps build understanding and buy-in that can lead to meaningful participation in work-based learning experiences.

This resource, part of the New Mexico Work-Based Learning Outreach and Engagement Resources of the [New Mexico Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#), provides:

- A ready-made **slogan and talking points** that give an overview of work-based learning
- **Benefits of work-based learning, organized by audience**, to help target messaging to what each audience needs most
- **Guidance and examples to adjust messages** to meet the needs of specific audiences within your community

Talking Points: Why Work-Based Learning Matters

Use the provided slogan and talking points when explaining work-based learning and the **New Mexico Work-Based Learning Toolkit** to all audiences.

- Use the **slogan** in short-form informational and awareness materials for your audience, such as digital media graphics, posters, billboards, and banners. (Example: Work-based learning posters)
- Incorporate **talking points** into informational and awareness communications, including presentation slides and scripts, classroom lessons, career advising, and professional development events.
- Supplement talking points with **data points** about local work-based learning participation and outcomes, when available.

Overarching Slogan

Work-Based Learning: Helping Every Student Find a Career That Fits

Talking Points and Casemaking Information

Work--based learning in New Mexico:

Gives every student opportunities to explore and be ready for work.

- Work-based learning is available for all students at all grade levels.
- [New Mexico's Work-Based Learning Continuum and Progression Guide](#) empowers students to move through four stages of experiences: learning Of, About, For, and Through Work.
- Work-based learning experiences are flexible and tailored to the unique needs of students and communities.

Builds valuable connections with employers and communities.

- Students receive advice, networks, and mentorship directly from industry professionals and employers through virtual and in-person experiences.
- Employers gain a more prepared workforce by helping students build exposure to, knowledge of, and confidence about workplace environments.
- Educators increase relevance and engagement in learning by connecting classroom content to real-world applications.
- Work-based learning helps strengthen communities by supporting new businesses and filling in-demand jobs.

Provides supportive environments to explore, gain, and master skills for college and career success.

- Students gain hands-on experience building career-ready practices (e.g., time management, collaboration) as well as the technical skills needed to succeed in any career.
- Learning Of and About Work gives students opportunities to build awareness of a wide range of careers, and to explore their strengths and interests.
- Learning For and Through Work provides real-life application of classroom learning in workplace settings, preparing students to enter high-wage, high-skill, and in-demand careers.

Benefits of Work-Based Learning by Audience

When communicating with specific audiences, information about work-based learning should align with their unique needs and values. Educators and school leaders, employers, students, and families each have distinct priorities that align with the wide range of work-based learning benefits.

Include the following benefits in communication materials for the specific audience you want to reach, such as:

- **Digital and printed materials** such as posters, flyers, videos, and social media graphics and copy.
- **Conversations**, including presentations, classroom lessons, career advising, and professional development events.

Students and Families

Elementary School Students

Discover where you fit in the world of work

- ✓ Explore lots of careers and how to be ready for them
- ✓ Discover what you are excited about and what you are good at
- ✓ Learn what you do at work and why it matters
- ✓ Meet people in lots of jobs and visit where they work

Middle School Students

Discover career paths and the skills you need to succeed:

- ✓ Explore what careers excite you and how to be ready for them
- ✓ Do hands-on activities with employers to learn about their work
- ✓ Build real-world skills for life and the job you want
- ✓ Learn how to start a business

High School Students

Get real experience and skills to get ahead in your career while you are still in school:

- ✓ Try out workplaces and build your network with employers across careers
- ✓ Connect classroom learning with hands-on experience
- ✓ Build real-world employability and technical skills
- ✓ Earn college credit and credentials that matter for your career path
- ✓ Have more options for employment before and after graduation

Employers

Enhance your current and future workforce through work-based learning:

- ✓ Build a skilled talent pipeline in your community to fill in-demand positions.
- ✓ Help students learn about all career paths available in your company and industry.
- ✓ Build a more prepared, motivated workforce by giving students opportunities to gain exposure, knowledge, and confidence in workplace environments.
- ✓ Strengthen connections with schools and enhance your profile in your community.
- ✓ Reduce recruitment, hiring, and training costs through public partnerships.
- ✓ Enhance employee purpose and engagement.
- ✓ Avoid starting from scratch—the [New Mexico Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#) provides definitions, standards, and templates to align educator and employer practices.

Educators and Local Leaders

The [New Mexico Work-Based Learning Toolkit](#) provides guidance to support educators and school leaders in providing high-quality work-based learning experiences for all students. The toolkit:

- ✓ Provides ready-made statewide definitions, standards, and templates for shared use by educators and employers.
- ✓ Shows how work-based learning experiences and work-based learning approved by the New Mexico Public Education can align with New Mexico academic content standards and graduation requirements.
- ✓ Clarifies roles and responsibilities for all work-based learning partners to make design, supervision, and evaluation easier.
- ✓ Prioritizes student safety, labor law compliance, and risk management.

Adjusting Messages to Fit the Needs of Every Student and Community

Message tailoring allows communicators to adjust or emphasize certain messages to better match the needs and values of the target audience. Tailoring can differentiate across roles connected to work-based learning, such as in the previous Benefits of Work-Based Learning by Audience section.

It can also be used to consider the unique experiences and needs of specific populations, including special populations defined in the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act (Perkins V) and populations identified in the [Martinez-Yazzie](#) decision (i.e., students with disabilities, English learners, Native American students, and economically disadvantaged students).

How to Apply Message Tailoring

- **Meaningfully Engage:** Directly engage the focus audience to build relationships and collect information about their perceptions of work-based learning, preferred communication channels, needs or barriers related to participation and success, etc.
- **Develop and Disseminate Messages:** Adjust talking points and messages about work-based learning benefits based on audience engagement, and then disseminate them through the audience's preferred communication channels.
- **Test and Adjust Messages:** Collect feedback from the target audience on messages received, adjust as needed, and continue repeating the cycle.

Advance CTE's [recruitment and engagement tool](#) provides templates and additional guidance for partner engagement and message tailoring.

Messaging Considerations

The following considerations may affect the ability of Perkins V special populations and student groups identified in the Martinez-Yazzie decision to participate and succeed in work-based learning:

- The quantity of businesses and industries represented in a community
- Geographic setting (e.g., rural, suburban, urban)
- Costs and supports needed to travel, prepare for, and participate in work-based learning
- Cultural considerations, including accepted norms, social habits, and values, as well as the role and prioritization of community, family, language, religious or spiritual beliefs, tradition, etc.¹
- Historical interactions with and perceptions of education, government, employers, specific industries, etc.

You are encouraged to identify additional considerations that are relevant to focus audiences and the larger community based on existing knowledge and ongoing partner engagement.

¹ https://web.ped.nm.gov/wp-content/uploads/_legacy/2025/02/NMIS-Guidance-Tool.pdf

Examples of Message Tailoring

This section provides examples of potential adjustments to supporting messages based on the considerations listed in the previous section.

Example 1

- **Supporting Message:** Work-based learning is available for all students at all grade levels.
- **Tailored Message:** Financial support is available for transportation, supplies, uniforms, and training to support your success in work-based learning.

Example 2

- **Supporting Message:** Work-based learning experiences are flexible and tailored to the unique needs of students and communities.
- **Tailored Message:** Work-based learning provides opportunities for experiences and student-led businesses that uplift Indigenous language, land, and culture.

Visit the [New Mexico Work-Based Learning website](#) for more resources and tools to implement and communicate work-based learning in New Mexico.