Work-Based Learning Challenges

The purpose of this tool is to engage leaders in reflecting on the types of policies, procedures, and practices that need to be reviewed when offering work-based learning opportunities to students.

Results from a 2012 Alliance survey (http://all4ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/WorkBasedLearningCT-KY.pdf) show the following challenges to offering work-based learning activities:

- state and local seat-time requirements that prevent students from attaining academic credit for learning opportunities that take place outside of the school building;

- lack of funding for transportation to and from work-based learning opportunities and limited district bus schedules that may restrict transportation to certain locations at certain times;

- liability concerns, particularly safety;

- logistical and financial constraints in providing compensation to participants; and

- lack of a formal definition describing high-quality work-based learning experiences.

Consider policies, procedures, and practices that address these challenges.

- **Curriculum:** When students participate in offsite learning experiences, it is important that they understand the content that informs the work they are doing in the field. Curriculum should be developed with appropriate contributions from employers. This can be done by developing partnerships with businesses and providing teachers with the time and resources to design assignments that connect academic content and real-world experiences.

- **Professional development and planning time:** Community and business partnerships should help in the creation of rigorous and relevant curriculum and also provide professional development opportunities for teachers to learn more about industry programs. Teachers may benefit from joint planning time to explore cross-curricular connections and to create authentic assessment tools. Districts should be sure that there are adequate resources and time allotted for teachers to learn from industry professionals and ensure alignment with curricula materials.

- **Scheduling:** State- and local-level policy should recognize out-of-school work experiences aligned with state standards as relevant instruction. This may require state regulations to redefine *classroom*. Additionally, states may choose to provide academic credit in these programs equivalent to a certain number of Carnegie credits, with appropriate guidelines around what classifies as a high-quality out-of-school experience. To allow for meaningful experiences in the field, districts that implement block scheduling may consider providing longer time blocks for students to participate in onsite experiences.

Activity

As a reference point, identify potential partnerships for a district work-based learning program. Consider changes to policies, procedures, and practices that support work-based learning. Record these in the chart, Supporting Work-Based Learning. Examples follow.

- **Policy example.** School leaders require students to spend three hours per week on a work-based learning assignment.

- **Procedure example.** District enters a memorandum of agreement with partners (e.g., higher education institutions and businesses) and arranges transportation for students.

- **Practice example.** Organizations and schools work together to develop curriculum, teaching materials, collaborative teaching opportunities, and approaches for assessing students that are aligned with the work-based learning experience.

ALLIANCE FOR EXCELLENT EDUCATION

Supporting Work-Based Learning

Policy Changes	Procedural Changes	Changes to Practices