CTE | TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER OF NY

ACTE'S WORK-BASED LEARNING CONFERENCE

REPORT & RESOURCES

In May 2024, CTE TAC Director, Mike Woods, had the opportunity to represent NYS at ACTE's Work-based Learning (WBL) Conference held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This annual event offered targeted professional development for WBL professionals in secondary and postsecondary CTE programs and institutions. Attendees gained access to numerous WBL resources and learned how effective networking can elevate high-quality work-based learning experiences. Over 1,000 CTE professionals forged strong business and community connections, created robust learning experiences for students, and discussed the hottest topics in work-based learning.

A NATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED PARTNERSHIP: WORK-BASED LEARNING, INDUSTRY PARTNERS, & POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

At the session, a comprehensive overview of the nationally recognized partnership between Lowndes High School and Ace Electric from Georgia was highlighted. The presentation covered everything about the partnership's construction, from its genesis to its launch and continued operation. It was fascinating to learn how this model was designed from scratch by the current Georgia ACTE Teacher of the Year (2023) to serve the local school, business partner, post-secondary institution, and state Department of Labor, ultimately aiming to bolster the local workforce, industries, and economy. Most importantly, the model has proven successful in serving students, enabling them to concurrently earn credit in high school, college, on the job, and with the Georgia Department of Labor as registered apprentices.

This program model is designed to be easily replicated by other schools, companies, and their partners. Proof of concept has already been established with the inaugural company and other businesses using this model. What's even better is that all **presentation resources** were provided to attendees of the session free of charge!

STRATEGIES FOR STRENGTHENING EMPLOYER SUPPORT FOR YOUTH APPRENTICESHIPS

During the session, participants dove into the pressing issue of labor shortages faced by employers, often resulting from a lack of suitable applicants or applicants lacking the necessary skills for vacant positions. The discussion highlighted how apprenticeships, traditionally associated with skilled trades, are often overlooked in other industries.

Funded by the US Department of Labor, the Cybersecurity Youth Apprenticeship Initiative (CYAI) aimed to challenge this misconception by introducing communities to a learn-while-you-earn model. The session provided an interactive platform to exchange tips on advocating for youth apprenticeships to employers.

Various topics were covered, including the urgent need for youth apprenticeships, strategies for crafting compelling messaging, developing value propositions for Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAPs) that resonate with employers, and hosting engaging employer information sessions. The session presentation can be found **here**.

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN LEARNING: A STATEWIDE WORK-BASED LEARNING INITIATIVE

The Illinois Work-Based Learning Innovation Network (I-WIN), highlighted its role in enhancing work-based learning programs statewide. I-WIN served as a model for collaboration among school districts, employers, and community colleges through communities of practice.

These communities of practice, primarily led by Illinois communities, focused on sharing best practices and resources. Notably, I-WIN emphasized diversity in its sessions, ensuring representation across various demographics to promote equitable access for all students.

Discussions within I-WIN addressed overcoming barriers in work-based learning, such as transportation issues and developing employer partnerships. Additionally, I-WIN maintained a resource hub to share best practices and support participating communities.

Initially unfunded in October 2020, I-WIN grew into a significant initiative with support from multiple funding sources, including subgrants for virtual projects and career exploration experiences.

The session aimed to explore innovation in work-based learning, emphasizing equity and collaboration in shaping policy changes within Illinois education. Attendees were invited to **discover** the transformative potential of work-based learning for students and communities.

SUCCESSES OF AN INTEGRATED AND INDUSTRY-SUPPORTED MODEL OF APPLIED K-16 LEARNING IN KENOSHA, WISCONSIN

Members of the National Coalition of Certification Centers (NC3) shared the comprehensive K-16 model for Applied Learning and Career and Technical Education that was developed and put into practice in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Educational and industry partners from NC3 described the process of developing and implementing this integrated learning experience, which aimed to enhance self-actualization and educational outcomes for students throughout their educational journey.

Presenters included leaders from Gateway Technical College, the Kenosha Schools of Technology Enhanced Curriculum, Snap-on Incorporated, Trane Corporation, Lincoln Electric, and Festo Incorporated. They **shared** successes and insights into this innovative system approach to applied learning, which included early age fully articulated "precertification experiences," integrated STEAM lab work, career exploration, and 21st-century skills development.

CAREER EXPOSURE IN THE K-8 CLASSROOM

At the **presentation**, attendees discovered how to initiate systemic change by integrating career exposure and exploration into the K-8 classroom. The session focused on how a Missouri district successfully implemented intentional, authentic, and impactful practices to enhance the K-8 student experience. These efforts aimed to revolutionize teaching and learning through best practices, not only improving student preparedness for the future but also reigniting teacher enthusiasm.

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY: THE GOLDEN TICKET FOR STUDENT AND PROGRAM SUCCESS

Attendees learned about the importance of partnering with industry and community members in school redesign. While this collaboration is crucial for career and technical education, many educators and institutions find it challenging. The session provided practical methods and resources to identify, cultivate, implement, and sustain partnerships that benefit all stakeholders, particularly students. Authentic **examples** were shared to equip participants with tools for success. Additionally, we explored how partner engagement strengthens local advocacy and its connection to national advocacy.

MORE THAN JUST A PRETTY PICTURE: DATA STORYTELLING FOR PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

Data collection and tracking were emphasized as vital aspects of any WBL program during the **session**. Presenters posed an intriguing question of how to ensure that we utilized our data effectively to sustain our program. The answer came in the form of data storytelling. It was explained that data storytelling goes beyond mere graphs and numbers, integrating narrative, data, and visualizations to convey insights in a manner that is both clear and memorable for our audiences. The session provided an introduction to data storytelling and demonstrated how it could be utilized to boost awareness, support, and buy-in for our program.

TRANSFORMATIONAL WBL: INCLUSIVE STRATEGIES FOR EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

This session highlighted that quality work-based learning had the potential to positively impact students' lives. I learned that students with disabilities should also have access to these high-quality work-based learning experiences, tailored to enhance their skills and align with their career aspirations. The session provided research-based strategies, practical applications, and real-life examples to support, advocate for, and advance quality work-based learning opportunities for students with disabilities. Attendees were assured they would depart with tangible steps and strategies to promote exceptional work-based learning experiences for students with disabilities, along with **free resources**. Additionally, it was noted that although the focus was on supporting students with disabilities, the strategies shared could also advance participation among underrepresented populations in work-based learning programs.

SELLING AND RECRUITING IN WORK-BASED LEARNING

Participants were introduced to simple and immediately applicable techniques aimed at assisting WBL practitioners in developing their skills as salespeople and recruiters to expand their program and employer network, ultimately benefiting their students. These strategies were designed to be effective for WBL/YAP programs in both rural and metropolitan areas. Attendees were assured they would depart with a toolkit and **tangible resources**, equipping them with the necessary skills and processes to secure more support for their programs.

THE “HANDSHAKE APPROACH” TO EDUCATION & BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Attendees were encouraged to ditch formalities and explore the exciting realm of education-business partnerships through the **"Handshake Approach."** The focus was on shaking up conventional collaborations to establish vibrant, dynamic connections between schools and companies. Real-life success stories and insider tips were shared, aimed at helping attendees cultivate relationships that enhanced the relevance of education and prepared students for the job market. Regardless of whether one was an educator, administrator, or a businessperson, the session served as a guide to fostering partnerships that benefited all parties involved. Nate, a certified economic development professional deeply embedded in education, provided his expertise and shared his experiences in bridging these two worlds to create opportunities in communities of all sizes.

CITY COLLEGES OF CHICAGO CENTER OF EXCELLENCE MODEL: A NEW APPROACH TO DELIVERING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYERS

The City Colleges of Chicago shared their commitment to providing pathways to mobility through industry-aligned career education programs. They established industry-specific Centers of Excellence (COEs) at each of their seven colleges, focusing on key industries in the Chicago regional economy with projected job growth. The COE model prioritized students and employers, ensuring curricula developed talent for successful employment. Recently, CCC partnered with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop a **COE Playbook** and tools for implementation. These resources provided operational guidance across four key areas. The workshop discussed the Playbook's development process, its tools, and the approach to implementation. The AIR team shared evidence-based practices for employer engagement, while CCC practitioners discussed how this initiative empowered the system to serve students, employers, and the greater Chicago community.