

Massachusetts Work-Based Learning Plan



Instruction Manual

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Introduction

Thousands of Massachusetts employers and schools are working together to provide student jobs/ internships, teacher “externships,” and design curriculum.

School-to-Career provides a structure for schools and businesses to close the gap between classroom learning and the skills necessary for career success.

The Work-Based Learning Plan is a tool to help the supervisor, student and teacher set clear goals and expectations so that the job/ internship is a productive experience for both employer and student.

How to Use the Learning Plan

Goal: The goal of the Work-Based Learning Plan is to promote and measure growth in general skill areas called competencies.

Methods: The Learning Plan realizes this goal through:

- an initial assessment of the student’s competency level (Review 1)
- setting goals
- follow-up assessment to document learning and productivity gain on the job (Review 2)

How to Rate Student Competency Levels:

The Learning Plan has nine competencies. You may find that only a few of the competencies match the job a student is performing. If so, identify those competencies and select those pages from your packet.

The Learning Plan has four rating levels in each competency area:

Needs Development Competent Proficient Advanced

- Each competency has a one-page worksheet. Each worksheet contains several sections which break the competency into specific skills.
- Rate the student in each skill by checking the appropriate box in each section which most closely matches the student.
- Once you have rated the student in each section of the competency, estimate the overall *average* rating in the competency and indicate it by checking a rating on the corresponding summary sheet.
- Record any comments and goals for progress in the marked space.

Competency Definitions

Individual Competencies

1. *Communication and Literacy*

The student demonstrates the ability to speak, listen, read, and write to function successfully at the work site.

2. *Organizing and Analyzing Information*

The student gathers, organizes, and evaluates the meaning of documents and information.

3. *Problem Solving*

The student identifies problems, understands their context and develops solutions.

4. *Using Technology*

The student identifies and applies appropriate technologies.

5. *Completing Entire Activities*

The student participates fully in a task or project from initiation to completion, using appropriate time-management skills.

Team Competencies

6. *Acting Professionally*

The student meets workplace standards on attendance, punctuality, dress-code, confidentiality, flexibility and self-control.

7. *Interacting with Others*

The student works professionally and respectfully with a diversity of co-workers, supervisors and customers, resolving conflicts in a constructive manner.

8. *Understanding All Aspects of the Industry*

The student understands the structure and dynamics of the entire organization, health and safety issues in the industry and the role of the business within the larger economy.

Personal and Professional Development Competency

9. *Taking Responsibility for Career and Life Choices*

The student balances demands of work, school and personal life and takes responsibility for developing his or her own personal and professional growth.

Suggested Time Line for Short-Term Placements (2–8 Weeks)

The objective is to measure the student’s skill development within a relatively short period. Focus on a few of the competencies and rate the student twice, at the beginning and end of the experience. The supervisor and student can focus on attaining realistic goals using this suggested time line. It requires getting started quickly in order to maximize the benefits of the process. You may need to adapt it to the needs of your particular work site.

Time Frame	Activity
Before Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify job description and tasks to be completed.• Pick the 3–5 competencies most critical to the job.• Share job description and competencies with student during job interview (if appropriate / applicable).• Complete cover sheet. Pull out work sheets for competencies selected and attach to cover and summary sheets.
First Week of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observe student’s performance on assigned tasks and projects.
Second Week of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct initial evaluation meeting with student; share your ratings with student; set goals in competency areas.
Throughout Period of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reinforce performance goals throughout the duration of the placement.
Final Week of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct the final assessment meeting; share the level of competency that the student has achieved.

Suggested Time Line for Extended Placements (8 Weeks or Longer)

The objective is to promote and measure the student’s growth over a substantial length of time. Because there is more time than a short-term placement, more competency areas can be addressed. To cover this ground successfully, observe the student’s performance for a longer period (one to two months) before making the initial assessment. Then, regular follow-up assessments (quarterly, for example) are made to ensure student’s progress.

Time Frame	Activity
Before Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop job description and tasks to be completed.• Share these with students during job interview.
First One to Two Months of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observe the student’s performance on the job.• Assess level in as many competencies as you can.• Conduct an initial evaluation meeting, sharing assessment with student, setting performance goals.
Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow-up with subsequent assessment meetings, acknowledging growth and setting goals where applicable.
Throughout Period of Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reinforce goals with student.
Final Week of Employment (or at appropriate intervals)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct the final assessment meeting; share the level of competency that the student has achieved.

Common Questions

What if a student performs between rating levels?

You may complete a worksheet and notice that you have checked one box at the Competent level and one at Proficient and yet another at Needs Development. Many supervisors ask how to rate a student in this situation. Use your best judgment to estimate a rating. If a student is truly between ratings in a competency, you should choose the lower rating at an initial evaluation because a student then has an attainable goal of reaching the higher level by the time of the next evaluation. If you set clear goals in the competency, the student will be able to achieve the next level by the next assessment. Seeing measurable progress gives the student a sense of satisfaction and reinforces the idea that he or she can achieve goals.

How are assessments shared with the student?

- Be direct and honest about strengths and weaknesses. Teenagers need honest feedback about their performance. Clarity about goals and expectations is also a critical component of student success.
- Invite the career specialist or teacher to meet with you at the work site if you are uncomfortable about communicating your feedback to the student.
- Verbal reinforcement of goals, objectives and progress between assessments is important. Regular communication on these topics will make it easier for you to give challenging feedback. It will also make for a more comfortable and productive relationship.

What is the student's role in the process?

- Explain the process to the student, so that he or she knows what to expect.
- Let the student develop his or her own Learning Plan, either with you, or simultaneously while you develop your version. Students quite often are close to their supervisors in their description of the job, their choice of competencies and even in how they rate themselves. This type of active participation heightens the student's self-awareness and understanding of what he or she can get out of the work experience.
- Involve the student in the goal-setting process. It can be very difficult for students to take the initiative and ask to work on a new project or task. An assessment meeting is often a good time to let the student know that you are interested in his or her development at the work site.

An Example: Rating the Student in Competency One

Below is a hypothetical scenario to demonstrate how to rate a student in a competency.

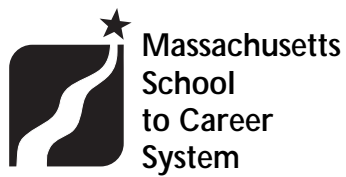
Jeff has been in the Corporate Accounts Department for four weeks. He is assigned various data-entry, filing and delivery duties. When he began, he was timid and quiet. Now he is comfortable with his co-workers. He speaks more in a sociable way and is always polite. He does not speak very much about his assignments or issues occurring in the department. He generally listens respectfully to instructions, but his supervisor is not always sure he understands, since Jeff makes eye contact, but says nothing to indicate whether he understands or not. When his supervisor asks him to type a memo regarding his accomplishments last week, however, he produces a document in which his grammar and punctuation are fairly good. Since then, his supervisor has considered giving him more writing assignments.

Rating Jeff:

Start with **Competency # 1, Communicate and Understand Ideas and Information.**

- In *Speaking*, he seems to fall between Needs Development, “Learning to speak clearly, audibly and courteously,” and Competent, “Speaks clearly and uses language appropriate to the environment both in person and on the phone.” He would be rated as Needs Development and given goals of speaking more often, especially about word-related issues, and learning the vocabulary used in the department.
- In *Listening*, he does “make eye contact,” but does not “repeat instructions to confirm understanding,” which define Competent, so he would be rated Needs Development, “Developing listening skills, working to make eye contact and confirm understanding.” His goal here would be to repeat instructions to his supervisor after he heard them, which, if accomplished, would bring him to the Competent level at the next evaluation.
- In *Reading*, it is unclear what his reading level is from this example, so he cannot be rated. He should be given some reading during the next evaluation period to assess his level.
- In *Writing*, his performance most closely matches the description under Competent, “Writes clearly with correct grammar,” so you would check that box.


In this competency, the overall rating would be Needs Development, since he received this rating in two out of three skills that could be rated, and received Competent in the third. He is an example of a student who could move up a level—to Competent—for the next assessment by achieving specific goals, such as taking the initiative to communicate, repeating instructions after he heard them and learning to use department terminology.



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