

Jobs to Careers

Promoting Work-Based Learning
for Quality Care.

The *Jobs to Careers* Work-Based Learning Worksheet

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JOB'S FOR THE FUTURE

The *Work-Based Learning Worksheet* is a tool that educators and employers can use in designing approaches to *work-based learning*, a novel approach to meeting labor force needs. Work-based learning taps the potential for instruction and skill development in the job itself, using job tasks and responsibilities to teach both work-related and academic skills. It builds on the competencies needed by workers to perform their jobs and links learning activities to job tasks requiring these competencies.

This worksheet offers a step-by-step process for determining the job competencies to teach, identifying work tasks that can incorporate work-based learning, and developing ways to determine when the employee/student attains the desired competencies. Users can experiment with this tool and adapt it to their own work settings and job requirements.

The *Work-Based Learning Worksheet* was developed from the practical experience of two partnerships: Northern Arizona University, in partnership with the Indian Health Services, and Asante Health Systems, of Medford, Oregon, in partnership with Rogue Community College. Both are part of *Jobs to Careers*, a national initiative that supports partnerships of employers, educational providers, and other

organizations to promote skill development and career advancement for frontline workers in health and health care. Its core concept is work-based learning. Jobs for the Future, the National Program Office of *Jobs to Careers*, adapted the tool for wider use.

In *Jobs to Careers*, employers and educators link the work process to education through *competencies*—the ability to use knowledge and skills and to perform critical work tasks. Job competencies are pivotal to successful work-based learning: they help educators tailor curricula and instruction to the job setting. They also create performance standards that enable employers to upgrade jobs, while giving workers skills, rewards, and objective standards for performance. However, to realize these goals, competencies must link both to actual job tasks that afford workers the opportunity to master competencies through the work process and to assessment techniques for determining when the competencies are mastered. In the best case, mastery of competencies also helps workers earn academic credit toward a degree or certificate.

The experience of *Jobs to Careers* sites offers guidelines for selecting competencies, job tasks, and assessment techniques for work-based learning:

- The competency should relate to applying or synthesizing knowledge.

- By mastering the competency, the employee will increase their skill-level and become a more productive member of the work team.
- If possible, the competencies are aligned with requirements for gaining academic credit.
- Foundational competencies, such as written communication skills, are distinguished from technical or clinical competencies, such as reading patient charts.
- Work-related tasks are real, not make-work.
- Work-based learning is facilitated by tasks that involve groups of students in learning teams.
- Assessment techniques should reflect learning strategies that promote reflection and skill acquisition, such as writing in a journal.
- Supervisors or other experienced staff assist employees with learning or applying competencies in their jobs.

In creating the worksheet, Northern Arizona University and Asante Health Systems

asked their employer and educational partners to define competencies and help develop work-based approaches to teach them. The NAU team did this for public health technicians serving the Navajo reservation; Asante and its partners applied NAU's approach to instruction in "medical informatics," a new position that combines medical information support with clinical knowledge. To convert the informatics curriculum to a format suitable for work-based learning, the partners employed a worksheet like this tool, featuring an example from Asante's project, drawn from a college course, "Concepts in Computing."

This tool has three steps:

1. Identify a competency that is necessary for performing a job well.

This step is a joint effort by the employer and the educational institution. In the sample provided here, Asante and its partners chose a competency that was needed on the job and aligned with a requirement for a college course:

SAMPLE:

Work-Based Learning Worksheet for the Competency "Using a Web Browser to Find Information Online"

Developed by Asante Health Systems and Rogue Community College

| |
|---|
| Competency: Using a Web browser to find information online |
| Work-Related Tasks |
| 1. Researching policies and procedures |
| 2. Conducting medical product searches |
| Assessment Techniques |
| 1. Evaluating students' journal writing about how they plan to carry out the searches |

“demonstrate correct use of a Web browser to search for information on the Internet or an intranet.” In addition, they identified the need to “apply search engine operators to refine search results” and “apply evaluation criteria to determine reliability of information found online.”

2. Select work-related tasks or activities that support learning of competencies.

The tasks selected depend on the employees’ work and the supervisors’ needs. After discussions among workers, supervisors, and educators, Asante partners identified several job-related tasks that required learning to use a Web browser, including “researching policies and procedures” of the institution and “conducting medical product searches.”

3. Select or develop techniques for assessing mastery of competencies.

A worker who has practiced the competency through the designated work activity can think critically about what he or she has learned, as opposed to simply doing the task. These techniques can include group activities, such as “learning cohorts” or circles, or individual activities, such as journal writing. In the example below, faculty assessed students’ journal entries about their Web searches to assess mastery of the competency.

Repeat this process, using additional worksheets for each competency.

Work-Based Learning Worksheet

| |
|------------------------------|
| Competency: |
| Work-Related Tasks |
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| 4. |
| 5. |
| Assessment Techniques |
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| 4. |

Resources on Work-Based Learning and Identifying Competencies

Jobs to Careers Web site: Links to articles, reports, and other resources on work-based learning, as well as information for and about *Jobs to Careers* partnerships.
www.jobs2careers.org.

Gill, Kenneth J. 2008. "Competency Identification: Laying the Groundwork for Work-based Learning." Learning Collaborative Roundtable for Jobs to Careers: Work-based Learning for Quality Care. Boston: Jobs for the Future. April 22. www.jobs2careers.org/pdf/Gill%20powerpoint%20WBL.pdf

Sten, Jan, Pam Frugoli, & LeeSa Page. 2006. "Competency Model Clearinghouse—Tools for Talent Development." Webinar. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration, Workforce3One, October 5. www.workforce3one.org/public/webinars/details.cfm?id=124&info=1

Wilson, Randall, with Kristina Cowan, Ed Phippen, and Rebecca Starr. 2008. *A Primer for Work-based Learning: How to Make a Job the Basis for a College Education*. Boston: Jobs for the Future. www.jobs2careers.org/pdf/J2CWorkbasedLearningPrimer.pdf

U.S. Office of Personnel Management. 2003. *Sample Job Analysis Worksheet for Competencies*. Washington, DC: U.S. Office of Personnel Management. www.opm.gov/deu/Handbook_2003/deoh-sample-2.asp

About Jobs to Careers

Jobs to Careers supports partnerships to advance and reward the skill and career development of incumbent workers providing care and services on the front lines of our health and health care systems. The initiative is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, in collaboration with the Hitachi Foundation and with additional support from the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. *Jobs to Careers* supports partnerships of employers, educational institutions, and other organizations to expand and redesign systems to:

- Create lasting improvements in the way institutions train and advance their frontline workers; and
- Test new models of education and training that incorporate work-based learning. The core concept of *Jobs to Careers* is “work-based learning,” which represents a novel approach to meeting labor force needs in health care as well as in other fields.

Key Components of *Jobs to Careers*

- Work-based learning is a key component of an overall skill building strategy that may also include an array of other learning approaches, such as more traditional off-site, on-site, technology-enabled, or experience-based learning.
- Career paths are developed and are readily available to frontline workers.
- Both the employer and education partners develop and implement changes that recognize the needs of working adults and that improve access to and success in skill building efforts by frontline workers.
- Frontline workers are recognized and rewarded as they build skills and expand knowledge necessary for their current job responsibilities or for advancing to new positions.

Essential Elements of Work-Based Learning in *Jobs to Careers*

Work-based learning is focused on building the essential skills and knowledge to effectively conduct current job responsibilities of the frontline worker and/or to advance in job responsibilities and career steps.

- The program is learner-centered. Learning is co-created by the individual learner and the person responsible for facilitating that learning.
- Development of the curriculum is shared between the educational institution and the employer.
- The facilitation of the learning is shared between the educational institution and the employer.
- The learning process is embedded in the work process.

Core Components of the *Jobs to Careers* Work-Based Learning Model

- The curriculum is embedded in the work process.
- Learning is embedded in the work process.
- Co-workers and supervisors are active participants in the process.
- Assessment is embedded in the work process.
- There is a strong potential for recognition and rewards as frontline workers build skills and expand knowledge necessary for their current job responsibilities or for advancing to new positions.
- Rewards (raises, promotions, credentials) are given for engaging in the program.
- Educational partners make organizational changes to support work-based learning.
- Employers make organizational changes to support work-based learning.
- Organizational leaders are engaged in the project and motivated to sustain the effort.