

Preparing Youth for Life:

THE GOLD STANDARDS FOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS

Research suggests that internships can produce substantial, long term improvements to young people's ability to earn money and make successful transitions into adulthood. Internships introduce students to the habits and value of compensated work, while making connections between academic learning and its real world application.

With support from the James Irvine Foundation, the National Academy Foundation (NAF) convened a task force of experts in work-based learning to develop the following set of standards that will help to maximize the benefits of high school internship experiences.

1. INTERNSHIPS ARE PART OF A CONTINUUM OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

Internships exist within a developmental learning framework and serve as the culmination of this continuum.

2. INTERNSHIPS ARE COMPENSATED

Youth receive compensation for their work in a manner that rewards them for their efforts, thereby mirroring the real-world work place; this compensation also holds employers accountable for developing meaningful, structured learning experiences.

3. INTERNSHIPS DRIVE EDUCATION EQUITY

High schools aim to achieve excellence and equity for every student. Internships are a part of a high quality education that equips students with the knowledge and skills to achieve their full intellectual and social potential.

4. INTERNSHIPS ARE BASED ON IDENTIFIED YOUTH INTERESTS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Internships and their objectives are stated in youth-centered, written, individual learning plans, differentiated for youth skill levels, and are based on work-based learning research and employer-defined work readiness skills needed for success.

5. INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES ALIGN WITH ACADEMIC LEARNING

Internships complement and support core competencies and academic requirements and are included as part of course curriculum.

6. INTERNSHIPS PRODUCE VALUABLE WORK THAT FURTHERS EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Internships help employers to develop their future workforce while creating long-term, sustainable partnerships that link the education of youth with the bottom line for businesses.

7. ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE PREPARED FOR, AND REFLECT UPON, INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES

The internship includes comprehensive preparation beforehand for youth, schools and employers to understand its goals, as well as a debrief after the internship has ended to reflect on the experience.

8. SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE TO SUPPORT INTERNSHIP PARTICIPANTS THROUGHOUT THE EXPERIENCE

Internships are supported by an operational structure that includes employers' points of contact with school personnel, supervision, an employer guidebook, orientation, employers' liability, evaluation, a defined timeframe, and a third party to provide continuity of pre-internship training, implementation and post-internship follow-up activities.

9. INTERNSHIPS ARE ASSESSED AGAINST IDENTIFIED YOUTH INTERESTS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Performance is evaluated before, during and after the internship experience. Assessment data is used to measure changes in motivation, attendance, engagement and achievement in the classroom.

10. INTERNSHIPS OCCUR IN SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

Internship experiences are compliant with legal, health, and safety regulations. Participants understand how to work with a diverse workforce.

To view the task force's full report, visit www.naf.org.

