

Indiana Department of Education
STUDENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Questions and Answers

1. What is a student internship program?

Indiana's School-to-Work Opportunities System is designed to include a variety of workplace learning experiences so that students can explore and prepare for careers. Six types of high intensity work-based learning opportunities are included in this system: internship, cooperative education, pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, school-sponsored enterprise, and supported employment.

An internship is a paid or unpaid work experience of a specified time period in the public or private sector that provides for workplace learning in an area of student career interest or preparation. Internships provide an opportunity to experience all aspects of work in a particular industry or career cluster area. They may take place during school hours, after school, or during the summer months, thus providing opportunities for students who carry heavy academic schedules. Internships are a means of linking academic learning with work-related experiences and can be tailored to the unique needs and interests of the learner and employer. A learning agreement outlines the expectations of all parties – the student, parent, employer, and instructor.

2. How are internships different from cooperative education programs?

Cooperative education programs are a more structured method of work-based learning with clearly defined criteria as outlined in Indiana Administrative Code (511 IAC 8-2-5.) Typically, students have completed some vocational courses and are placed at a work site because they have a more clearly defined career focus. Training plans target specific occupational skills to be learned on the job and students must be paid for time spent at work. A related class must be included in the program design. Students earn three credits per semester and teachers must be properly licensed. The primary focus is on career preparation.

Internship programs can also be paid, career preparation experiences, but the design allows more flexibility. The program can be modified to meet the needs and interests of students as they try to confirm or reject initial career selections. Students may be assigned to several work sites during the program and may utilize the experiences as a means of exploring different careers. Learning agreements may focus on more generic, transferable skills which are not related to any one particular occupation or industry, but which are crucial to successful employment and promotion (i.e., problem-solving, teamwork, time management.)

3. Is an internship program allowable under the current list of course titles/descriptions approved by the State Board of Education?

A multidisciplinary course titled "Vocational/Career Information" is an approved course offering for high school students. The description includes language about developing employability skills and learning about various careers through "...field trips, **internships**, mock interviews, and guest speakers." It is generally offered as a one-hour, one-semester course. If schools wish to develop an innovative internship program that varies from the description, a non-standard course waiver may need to be submitted. (See Rule 8 of the Indiana Administrative Code).

4. **What staffing pattern is allowable for an internship program?**

Because of their training and experience, teachers who have a cooperative education license or endorsement would be ideal choices for staffing this program. However, current course loads and student/teacher ratio considerations may limit the ability of these teachers to take on additional responsibilities for this program. If internships are offered under the **Vocational/Career Information** course title, a wide range of staffing options is available. According to the 1993 Assignment Code from the Professional Standards Board, any licensed teacher or school counselor can be assigned to this course.

5. **Is participation in staff development required for non-vocational educators assigned to internship program?**

Participation is not required but is highly recommended. Non-vocational educators may need training to ensure that internship activities take into consideration such issues as state and federal labor laws, health and safety practices, and methods of connecting school-based learning to students' experiences in the workplace.