



VOLESKY
CONSULTING

WBL ECOSYSTEM

Moving From Experiences to Systems

*Not all WBL systems are designed to succeed.
This tool helps you see the difference.*

Assessing Your WBL Ecosystem

Where is your system strong and where is it exposed?

A WBL ecosystem is not a collection of experiences. It is a system that ensures learning is intentional, connected, and designed to build student growth over time. Use this assessment tool to identify opportunities to strengthen your work-based learning (WBL) ecosystem.

Directions: Select the rating that best reflects your current system. Use evidence, not intention, to guide your response.

	Not in Place	Inconsistent	Systemic
1. Staff Learning & Support Staff share a clear definition of WBL, understand their role, and have time and support to embed experiences into learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Data Use & Decision-Making WBL data is used to identify gaps, improve experiences, and inform decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Transformational Experiences Experiences are intentionally designed to build skills, expand professional networks, and support meaningful career decision-making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Inclusive Access Barriers are identified and addressed so all students can access meaningful WBL experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Business & Community Partnerships Partnerships are sustained to support high-quality experiences aligned to student learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Strong ecosystems are intentionally designed.

What Defines a Strong WBL Ecosystem

Strong systems do not rely on individual effort or isolated programs. They are intentionally designed, consistently implemented, and continuously improved.

1. Staff Learning & Support

✓ A strong system demonstrates:

- Staff share a clear and actionable definition of WBL across the system.
- Roles and ownership are clearly defined across departments and do not depend on one individual.
- Time is intentionally built into the system for planning, coordination, and implementation.
- Staff have the capacity to embed WBL into courses and learning experiences.
- Teams collaborate across departments to ensure experiences are connected and sequenced over time.

⚠ If not in place, you may see:

- Staff have inconsistent understandings of WBL.
- Programs depend on one person to sustain them.
- WBL is not meaningfully integrated into the curriculum.
- Efforts are disconnected or duplicated across the system.

2. Data Use & Decision-Making

✓ A strong system demonstrates:

- WBL data is reviewed regularly by a team rather than in isolation.
- Participation data is used to identify and address access gaps.
- Data is used to inform decisions about expansion, sequencing, and improvement.
- Data is shared in meaningful ways with internal and external stakeholders.
- Data is used to guide both student opportunities and partner engagement.

⚠ If not in place, you may see:

- Data is collected but not used to inform decisions.
- There is limited awareness of participation gaps.
- Expansion decisions are based on convenience rather than need.
- Opportunities to strengthen programming are missed.

Strong systems are built on clarity, consistency, and shared ownership.

What Defines a Strong WBL Ecosystem

3. Transformational Experiences

✓ A strong system demonstrates:

- Experiences are intentionally designed using a before, during, and after learning model.
- Students build both technical skills and professional connections, including social capital.
- Experiences are intentionally sequenced across a student's academic experience to support growth over time and avoid isolated exposure.
- Reflection is embedded to help students connect experiences to future decisions.
- Experiences are aligned to student interests, goals, and evolving pathways.

⚠ If not in place, you may see:

- Students complete tasks without meaningful learning.
- Students have limited interaction with professionals.
- Experiences do not build on one another over time.
- Students are unclear about what they gained or what comes next.

4. Inclusive Access

✓ A strong system demonstrates:

- Participation data is used to identify which students are not accessing opportunities and why.
- Barriers such as transportation, time, awareness, and support are actively addressed.
- Students who miss early experiences are re-engaged through additional opportunities.
- Supports are built into the system rather than added as an afterthought.
- Participation reflects the diversity of the student population.

⚠ If not in place, you may see:

- The same students consistently access opportunities, while others remain excluded.
- Access depends on relationships or student self-advocacy.
- Students opt out due to barriers.
- Participation gaps persist over time.

5. Business & Community Partnerships

✓ A strong system demonstrates:

- Partnerships are ongoing, supported and, not limited to one-time experiences.
- Business and community partners are prepared, guided, and valued throughout the process.
- Experiences are co-designed to balance student learning with partner needs.
- Outreach is coordinated across the system to maximize impact and reduce duplication.
- Partnerships contribute to both student growth and broader community outcomes.

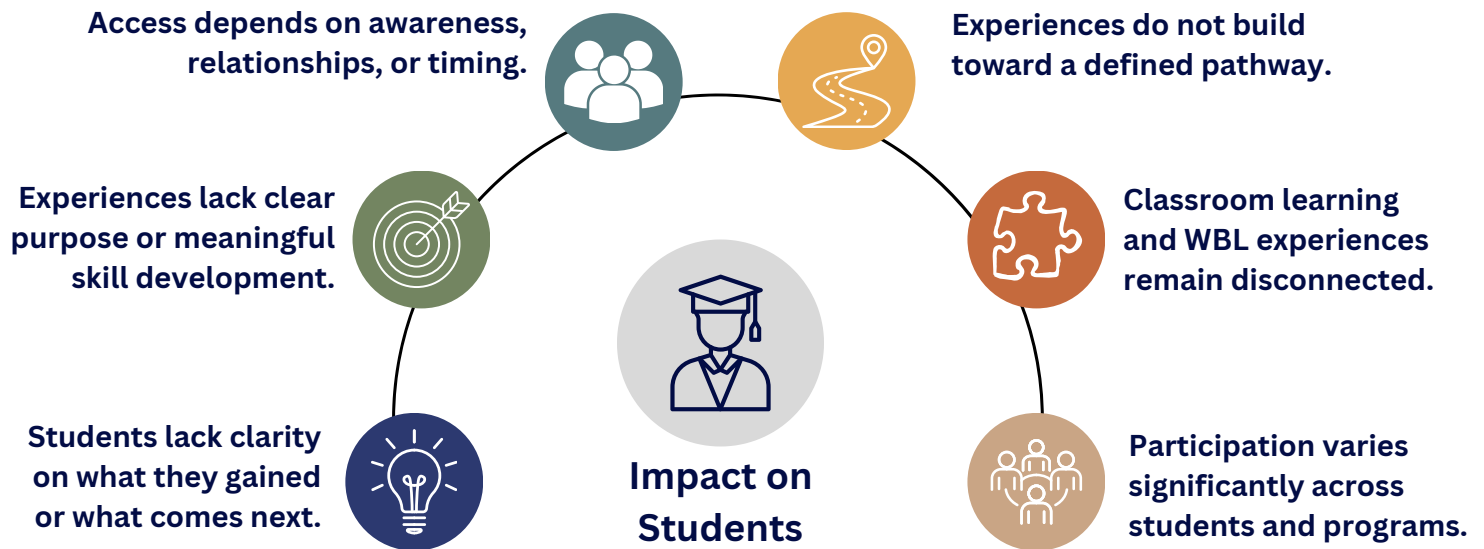
⚠ If not in place, you may see:

- There is a constant need to find partnerships.
- The quality of WBL experiences is inconsistent.
- Partners experience fatigue or disengagement.
- Opportunities to build long-term collaboration are missed.

What Your System Is Producing

When key elements of a WBL ecosystem are missing or disconnected, these patterns begin to shape student experiences and outcomes.

What Your System Is Producing



1 What Outcomes Is Your System Producing?

Which are most evident in your system?

- Students participate, but do not build meaningful skills or connections.
- Access is uneven, and some students consistently benefit while others do not.
- Experiences feel isolated rather than part of a larger learning journey.
- Students struggle to translate experiences into future decisions or opportunities.
- Opportunities depend on individual staff or partner relationships.
- Students disengage due to barriers such as time, transportation, or lack of support.

2 What Is Contributing to These Outcomes?

Which areas of your system may be driving these patterns?

-  **Staff Learning & Support**
-  **Data Use & Decision-Making**
-  **Transformational Experiences**
-  **Inclusive Access**
-  **Business & Community Partnerships**

Beyond WBL: Is Your System Connected?

Work-based learning is one powerful strategy, but it cannot function in isolation. Real impact comes from how learning experiences are connected across a system.

Your Learning & Community System



Students do not experience these separately.
They experience the system we design.



In your system, are these experiences:

Mostly isolated

Somewhat connected

Intentionally aligned

Strong systems are intentionally connected, not built in pieces.

What Changes When Systems Align



Learning becomes connected over time.



Students build momentum and direction.



Opportunities expand through coordination.

But even strong work-based learning systems are not enough on their own.

If We Stop at WBL

- Students gain exposure but not a clear sense of purpose or belonging.
- Leadership development is left to chance instead of being cultivated.
- Entrepreneurship and innovation are not intentionally supported.
- Students leave for opportunity elsewhere because they do not see a future locally.

When Systems Expand Beyond WBL



Students become contributors, not just participants.

They see themselves as future leaders, builders, and decision-makers.



Opportunity becomes something they can build.

Entrepreneurship, leadership, and service are intentionally developed.



Communities begin to retain their future.

Students see a reason to stay, return, invest, and lead locally.

Strong systems do not just prepare students. They shape the future of their communities.

This Is the Work of EduVitality

If we only prepare students for careers, we miss the opportunity to develop leaders, builders, and community members. EduVitality aligns education and community systems to develop not just students, but the future of a place.

EduVitality Aligns:

- education
- leadership development
- entrepreneurship
- service and civic engagement
- real-world learning
- community systems



To build places where:

- people belong
- people grow, and
- people choose to stay



EduVitality
(Education + Community Vitality)

This is about how a community develops its future.

This work is complex and too important to navigate alone.

We partner with schools, colleges, communities, and economic development leaders to build:

- Connected learning systems that extend beyond WBL.
- Leadership and entrepreneurship pipelines that strengthen local economies.
- Student-centered systems that increase access, belonging, and long-term opportunity.
- Aligned education and community strategies that drive sustainable growth.

Ready to move from ideas to action?



Volesky Consulting is a national education and community strategy firm recognized for designing systems that connect learning, leadership, and long-term community vitality.

Led by Kristy Volesky, the firm works with schools, colleges, organizations, and communities to move beyond isolated efforts and build aligned systems that expand opportunity, strengthen local economies, and develop future leaders.

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Explore more at: www.voleskyconsulting.com

Do not wait for better outcomes. Design a better system.

