



Work Based Learning Experience Preparation Guide for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors

This guide is designed to support Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors in preparing students with disabilities for participation in Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE). It serves as a structured tool to facilitate meaningful conversations during Pre-ETS Counseling & Guidance (C&G) sessions and ensure that students are equipped with the foundational knowledge, supports, and planning needed to successfully begin their first work experience.

Work-Based Learning Experiences are critical opportunities for students to explore career interests, build essential job skills, and gain real-world exposure in a supported setting. However, success in these experiences often depends on thoughtful preparation across multiple domains—including transportation, benefits planning, accommodations, work readiness, and communication.

This preparation guide includes a phased checklist and discussion prompts that can be used:

- During initial C&G meetings to assess readiness and identify goals
- As a collaborative planning tool with families, schools, and community rehabilitation providers
- To document and track progress across the pre-placement, placement, and post-placement phases of WBLE

By using this guide, VR Counselors can promote consistency, ensure critical logistics are addressed, and empower students to enter their work experiences with confidence and clarity.

One-on-One Career Counseling Prompts

Getting to Know Interests & Preferences

- If you could be famous for doing one thing, what would it be?
→ Taps into dream scenarios and highlights hidden strengths or interests.
- What's something you've taught someone else how to do?
→ Reveals confidence, leadership, and personal skill sets.

The contents of this publication were developed under grant H421E230004 from the U.S. Department of Education. The Department does not mandate or prescribe practices, models, or other activities described or discussed in this document. The contents of this insert type of publication may contain examples of, adaptations of, and links to resources created and maintained by another public or private organization. The Department does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of this outside information. The content of this publication does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department. This publication is not intended to represent the views or policy of or be an endorsement of any views expressed, or materials provided by any Federal agency (EDGAR 75.620).

- What's a task or activity that makes you lose track of time?
→ Identifies natural flow states that could align with job functions.
- What's your favorite way to relax or have fun?
→ Helps uncover recreation or lifestyle needs that influence job satisfaction.
- What was your favorite class or project in school and why?
→ Links academic interests to possible training or work areas.
- If you could volunteer anywhere, where would it be and what would you do?
→ Explores service-oriented roles and low-pressure career exposure.
- What would you post about if you had a blog, vlog, or online store?
→ Encourages self-expression and entrepreneurial vision.
- Is there a job someone in your family does that you think is interesting?
→ Opens conversation about real-life influences and role modeling.

Linking Interests to Career Options

- Can you think of a job where people do something similar to your hobby?
→ Encourages a direct bridge from recreation to vocation.
- What tools, apps, or equipment do you like using? Could they be part of a job?
→ Leverages familiarity with technology into job-related skills.
- Think of a time you helped someone. What were you doing, and how did it feel?
→ Supports exploration of service roles and emotional satisfaction from work.
- What do you think would be the hardest part about having a job? What might help with that?
→ Surfaces concerns and opens up planning around accommodations.
- Do you prefer starting new things or improving things that already exist?
→ Clarifies innovation vs. maintenance preferences in work tasks.
- Let's say you had to make your own job title—what would it be and what would you do?
→ Promotes creative thinking and job carving.
- If you could spend a day in someone else's job, whose would it be and why?
→ Offers insight into career curiosity and observational learning.

Creative Conversation Starters with a Purpose

- What kind of job would a character in your favorite book or movie *not* be good at?
→ Builds critical thinking about skills, environments, and fit.

- If your dream job had a dress code, what would it be?
→ Makes abstract career talk feel more concrete and relatable.
- Design a business card for your future self. What's your job title? What's your slogan?
→ A hands-on, visual way to talk about goals and identity.
- What would your office or workspace look like in your dream job?
→ Explores sensory preferences and environment compatibility.
- If you could make a playlist for getting ready for work, what songs would be on it?
→ Adds personal style to routines and can aid in motivation strategies.
- If you could change one thing about school to make it feel more like a job, what would it be?
→ Helps draw parallels between school experience and employment expectations.
- What kind of problems do you enjoy solving?
→ Reveals strengths in decision-making, logic, or people skills.

Prompt-to-Plan Follow-Up Questions

Use these after any prompt to deepen planning and support next steps:

- Can you see yourself doing that as part of your weekly routine?
- Would you want to try this as a volunteer, intern, or part-time job first?
- Should we look for a training or class that helps you explore this more?
- Who could help support you in reaching this goal?