



New York State Education Department  
Office of Special Education  
**Educational Partnership**





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# How to Effectively Build and Manage Business Relationships for Work-Based Learning (WBL) Experiences

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Produced by the Technical Assistance Partnership for Transition at Cornell University.

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# Disclaimer

The resources shown are designed to provide helpful information. Resources are provided for instructional use purposes only and do not constitute NYSED endorsement of any vendor, author, or other sources. To the best of our knowledge, the resources provided are true and complete.



# Introductions



- Name
- Educational Organization (EO)
- Position

# Meeting Norms

- Take care of your needs (water, food, restroom, etc.).
- Speak your truth; use “I” statements.
- Ask what you need to understand and contribute.
- Listen with respect.
- Push your growing edge.
- Participate and struggle together.
- Expect a lack of closure.
- Respect each others’ needs.

# Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities



## Self-Advocacy

Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.



## Family Partnership

Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.



## Specially-Designed Instruction

Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.



## Research-Based Instruction

Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.



## Multi-Tiered Support

Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.



## Inclusive Activities

Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.



## Transition Support

Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.

# Training Materials



New York State  
Education  
Department  
(NYSED)  
Documents

Reflection  
Documents

Tools and  
Resources

# Training Objectives

## Participants will:

- Review what WBL looks like in New York State (NYS) including specific examples of how community businesses can participate in WBL experiences.
- Utilize strategies and resources designed to effectively recruit and build rapport with local businesses.
- Identify methods and resources to positively maintain business relationships throughout and beyond WBL experiences.

# Know Want Learn (KWL) Planning Tool



Take a moment to complete the first section of the KWL Planning Tool.

- **K**—What do you **know** about **developing business partnerships to support WBL experiences?**
- **W**—What do you **want** to know about **developing business partnerships to support WBL experiences?**
- **L**—How can you **apply what you learn** here today to your EO?



# Exploring WBL in NYS



# Defining WBL



- WBL is **authentic learning experiences** that allow students to **explore their career goals, abilities, and interests** while **applying their academic and technical knowledge and skills** in a **real-world context**.
- These experiences are planned and supervised by instructional staff in **collaboration** with business, industry, or community partners.
- High-quality WBL will provide **effective and equitable** experiences to empower all students to become confident workers and culturally competent citizens of NYS.

# Understanding WBL

## WBL is:

- Driven by student-identified career interests
- A meaningful work experience in an integrated community-based workplace
- A continuum of workplace opportunities
- Students engaging in real work activities

## WBL is not:

- Placing students in school settings that do not align with their interests and preferences
- Working in a segregated or sheltered work environment
- An isolated experience that is disconnected from the student's overall transition goals
- Students placed in sites without assessment or evaluations

# Getting Businesses on Board



# Benefits of WBL for Employers

- Training can be tailored specifically to both the employers' needs and the needs of the students, leading to an increase in productivity and engagement.
- Companies are provided an opportunity to develop a highly skilled and productive future workforce.
- Communities are provided an opportunity for community members and employers to develop respect and understanding among individuals with and without disabilities.
- Employers can increase community networking by participating in a school's business advisory board.

# Business Advisory Board



## Benefits for Businesses

- An opportunity for local businesses to give back to their community
- An opportunity for local businesses to develop relationships with other employers
- Access to future talent

## Benefits for Schools

- Professionals share insight and experience with students and teachers
- WBL experiences are an integral piece of EO's culture and expectations for students
- Increased understanding of employer/business needs

# Offer a Range of Opportunities for Businesses to Get Involved (1 of 2)



There are many ways businesses can contribute including:

## Career Awareness Experiences

- Career Fairs
- Guest Speakers
- Industry/Workplace Tours
- Informational Interviews

# Offer a Range of Opportunities for Businesses to Get Involved (2 of 2)



There are many ways businesses can contribute including:

## Unregistered WBL Experiences:

- Job Shadowing
- Mentoring
- Internships/Entrepreneurships
- Community-Based Work Experiences

# Reflect on Current Practice



- Does your EO already partner with businesses?
- What opportunities could be developed to involve business partners?
- How can you help business partners prepare to participate in WBL experiences?

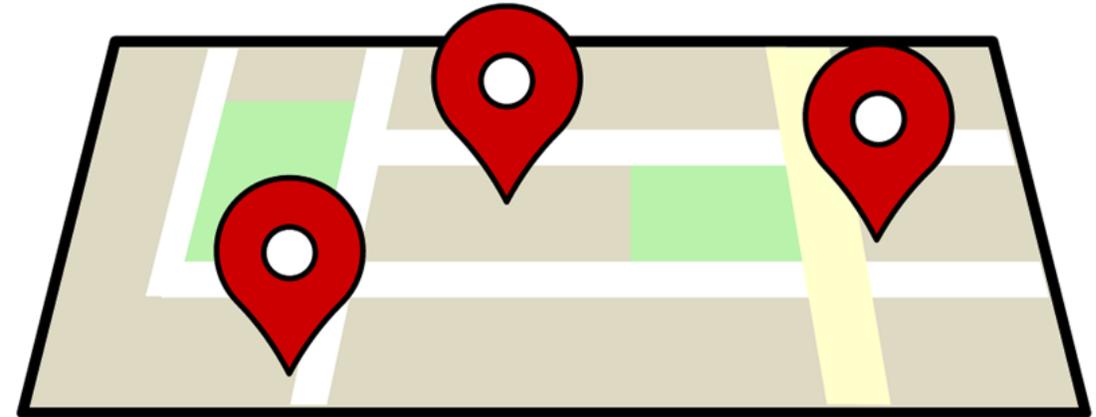
# Establishing Business Relationships



# What Resources Exist in Your Community?



- Are there resources within the community which students can access that support WBL experiences?
- How are students/educators looking for resources?
- What businesses/organizations could you connect with to expand your network?



# Develop a Resource Network



Once you've begun to think about community resources and how they translate to potential WBL experiences for students, you'll then want to connect with the businesses. This can be done:

- Informally through a phone call, email, or in-person conversation
- Formally through an Agency Interview Form

# Use Business-First Language

- Use business-first language to describe what you can do for the employer.
- Emphasize you are helping prepare the future labor force rather than promoting the work you are doing to develop WBL experiences.
- Avoid using language, terms, and acronyms, such as vocational experience, WBL, Individualized Education Program (IEP), Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), work-study, and cooperative learning.

# Utilizing a Strength-Based Approach

## Avoid the “Charity Model”

- Focus on how the school-business partnership can benefit the business, not exclusively on benevolent or charitable reasons.
- Meeting a business need will support the ongoing partnership, appealing to altruism undermines the business value and may result in short-lived relationships.
- Utilizing a strength-based approach promotes student competence and skills rather than a caretaker/custodial perspective.

# Understand the Employers' Needs



- View businesses as customers.
- Take steps to understand their needs.
- Ensure you are developing the correct match of student to the employer.
- Recognize businesses make decisions based on business needs, not WBL needs.
- Adjust service delivery as necessary to continue to meet their needs.

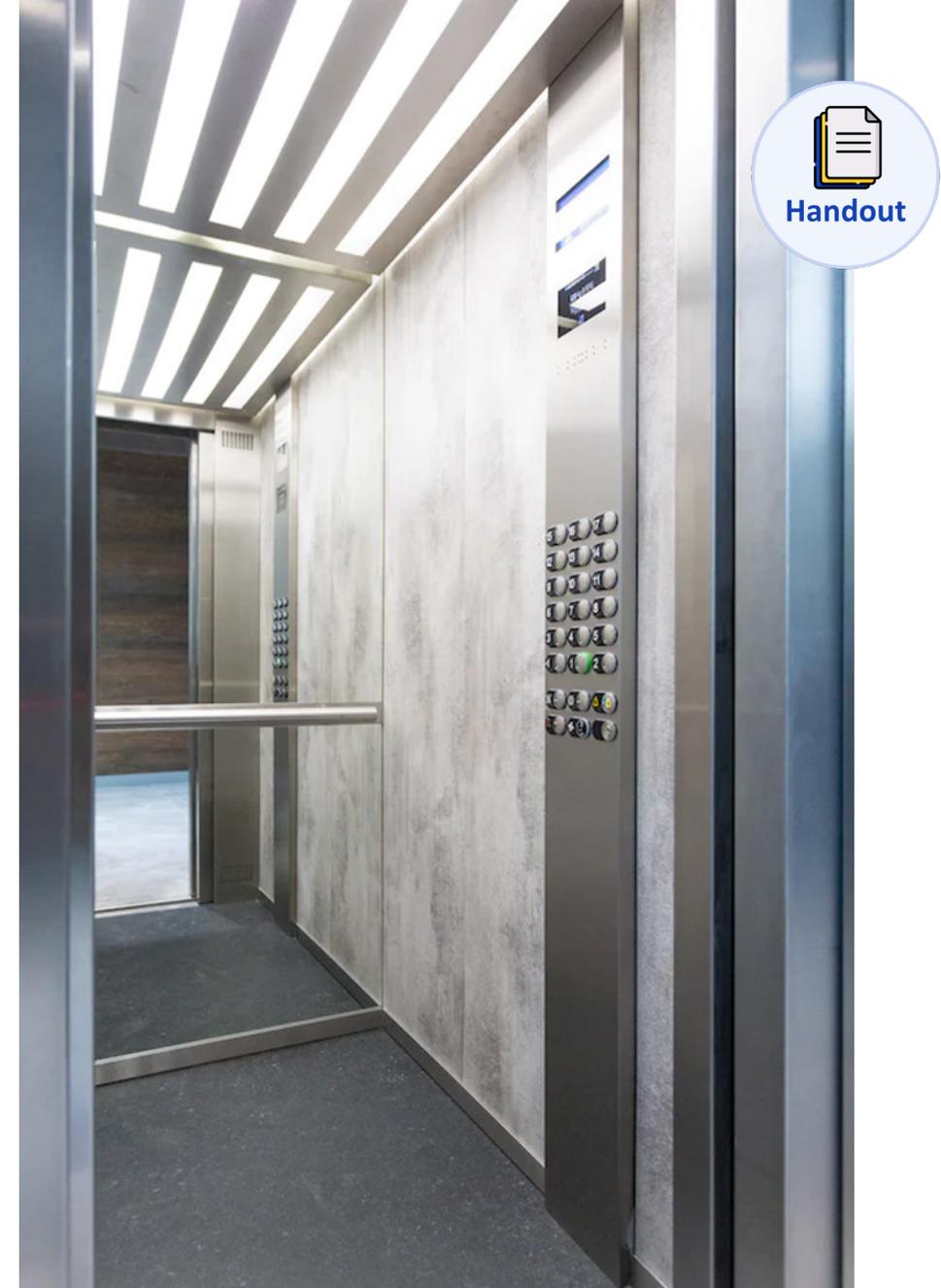
# Conduct Informational Interviews



- Ask to meet with a person knowledgeable in the business.
- Make the meeting request easy to fulfill.
- Be prepared.
- Indicate an interest in understanding the business' staffing and operational needs and learning how you may be able to assist the employer in meeting them.
- Keep it short.
- Thank the employer for their time.

# Develop an Elevator Speech

- An elevator speech should:
- Be short and concise
- Positively reflect the WBL experience and the students you work with
- Explain how you can assist their business grow future talent
- Leave employers wanting to hear more



# Elevator Speech Activity



Using the handout as a guide, develop an elevator speech you would use when trying to secure new WBL placements for your students.

- What is your goal?
- What do you think is important to include?
- What should you leave out?
- Did you use business-first language?

# Advancing and Maintaining Employer Relationships



# Match Student Skills and Interests to Job Tasks

- Know both the student's capabilities and interests and the employer's circumstances thoroughly.
- Identify tasks that are important to both the student and the employer.
- Customize assignments as necessary.
- Propose and negotiate task assignments.

# Meet Employer and Student Needs

## WBL experiences should:

- Match student skills, interests, and preferences to job tasks
- Be a meaningful work experience in an integrated community-based workplace
- Offer ongoing support and training at the worksite
- Provide employers with ongoing disability awareness training

## WBL experiences should not:

- Place a student at a site because you know the employer/have worked with them before
- Be only in-school placements
- Place a student without following up with both the student and employer through monitoring, job coaching, and evaluations
- Force a student to disclose their disability/not provide disability awareness training to both parties

# Representing a Student's Disability to Employers

Whether representing the student or helping the student learn how to represent themselves with disclosing a disability, these guidelines are important to consider.

## Do

- Link the discussion of disclosure to the development of self-determination and self-advocacy
- Determine the reason and need for disclosure, weigh the advantages and disadvantages
- Limit information sharing to essential persons, determine who needs to have this information and why
- Plan and practice how to disclose with the student
- Relate disclosure information in the context of how it will affect specific work situations

## Don't

- Share personal information about the student without consent
- Discuss a student's personal information with people who are not involved in their education/service delivery
- Ask personal questions in a group or public setting
- Leave written information in an area where it may be read by others not involved in the delivery of the student's services

# Establish a Single Point of Contact

- Helps employers have an easy time understanding and relating to your EO
- Allows the contact to become actively involved with and responsive to the employer's needs
- Decreases the confusion and duplication when connecting with multiple people from one organization
- Encourages professional and responsive contact with the employer
- Allows for a clear communication method to be decided on (e.g., phone call, text, email)

# Support Training and Monitoring of the Student at the Worksite

- Clarify employer expectations about job training, coaching, and provide follow-up
  - How often will you be on-site?
  - What happens if a problem arises?
  - Is there a written support plan?
- Follow through on agreed-upon procedures
  - Be physically on the job site when you/the job coach said you would be.
  - Connect with the employer through their preferred method.

# Solicit Employers' Feedback

Gather feedback on both student performance and program service



## Student performance:

- What are the student's strengths?
- What does the student need to improve?
- Would the employer consider hiring the student after the experience?

## WBL Program:

- What does the employer like about the school's WBL program?
- What does the employer not like about it?
- What can be improved?

# Encourage Ongoing Connections

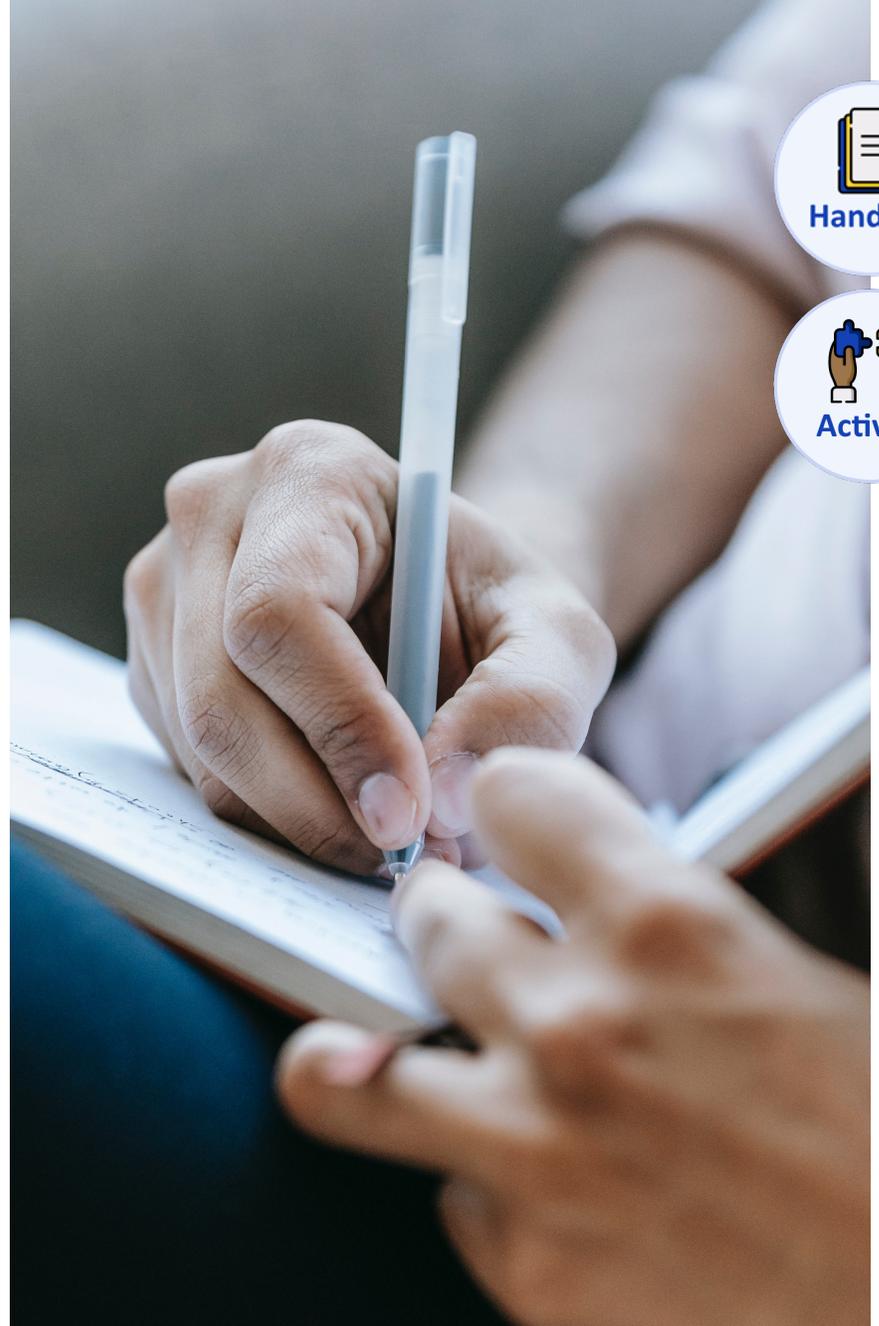
- Host a career day or a career night for students and families to learn about various businesses, organizations, and jobs across the community.
- Invite employers into the classroom to show students how the skills and knowledge they are learning in the classroom are applied throughout the workplace.
- Have students participate in field trips to local businesses where they can learn about the different positions and the education and skills needed to obtain them.
- Partner with local businesses and organizations to coordinate a community service project.
- Encourage businesses to host a student intern to build work experience and promote community partnerships.

# Encourage Ongoing Connections (continued)

- Encourage employers to inform you of job openings and internship opportunities so you can post them around the school and connect the right student to the right position.
- Coordinate a mentorship program that offers students enrichment opportunities such as work-ready skills, career exploration, and college access.
- Recognize employers for their support and efforts by hosting a breakfast to show appreciation and/or providing them with a Certificate of Appreciation or another similar idea.
- Invite businesses to serve on the school's Business Advisory Board.
- Identify additional regional supports and services using the [NYSED Community Resource Map](#).

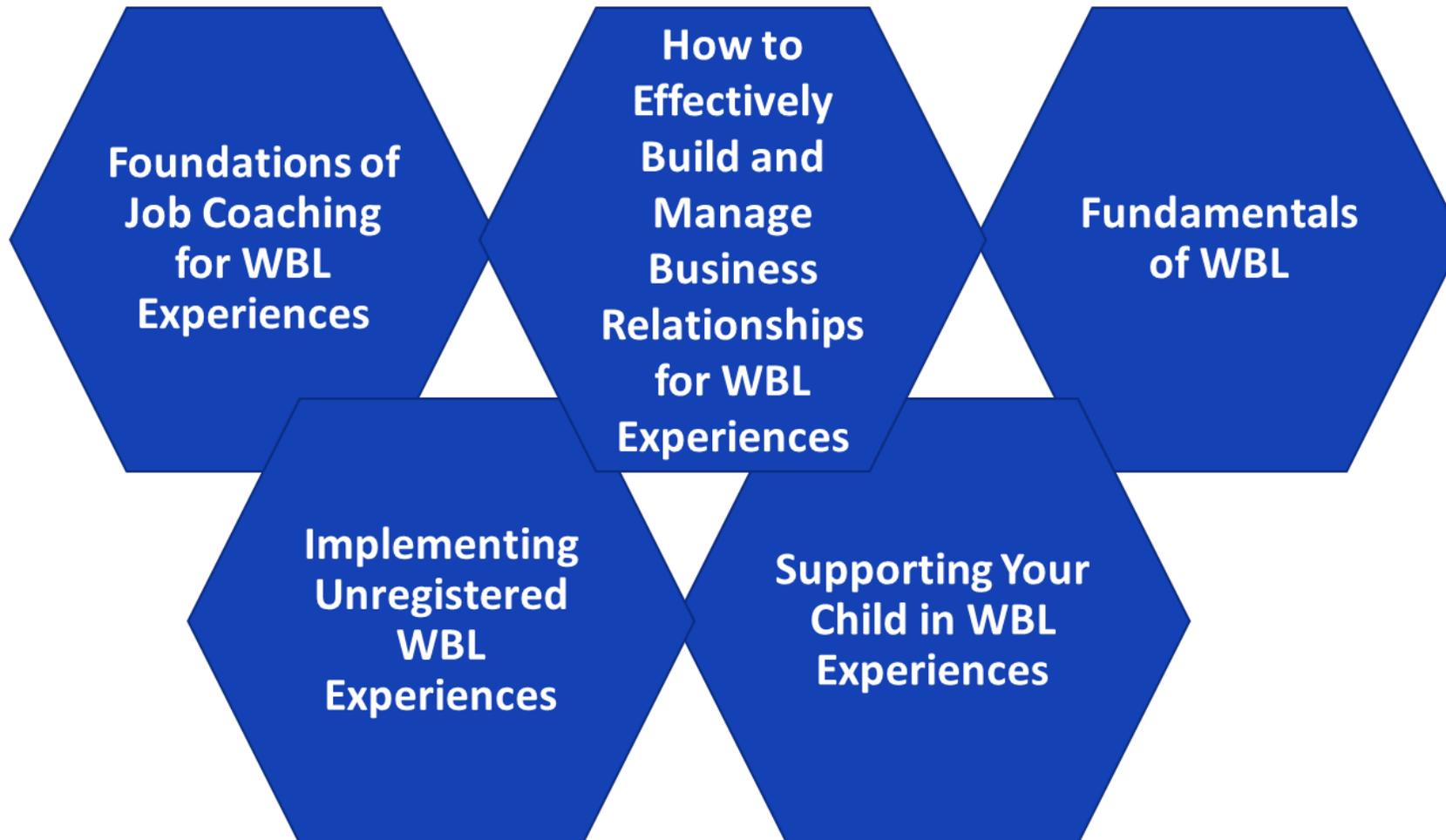
# Final Reflection

1. List any strategies that you and/or your EO currently use to build and maintain business relationships.
2. Reflect or list any new strategies learned today that you will begin to use.
3. List WBL experiences you think employers in your community would be interested in working on.
4. List your next steps to build and maintain business relationships.



# Additional WBL Trainings

## Continuing the Learning



# Questions



# Resources

[Career Connections Guides](#)

[Engaging Employers: A Guide for Disability and Workforce Development Service Providers](#)

[NYSED Community Resource Map](#)

[NYS WBL Manual](#)

# Resources (Continued)

[NYC DOE WBL Toolkit](#)

[Preparing for Employment: On the Home Front: Promoting Effective Parent Involvement in Secondary Education and Transition](#)

[The Disclosure Dilemma for Advocates](#)

[TransitionTN | Blueprint for Student Success](#)

# References

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# Contact Us

## TAP for Transition

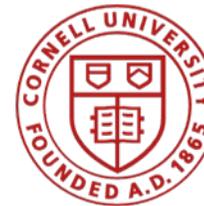
Amber McConnell, Director  
[TAPtransition@cornell.edu](mailto:TAPtransition@cornell.edu)



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