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# FHI 360 WORK-BASED LEARNING MANUAL: A HOW-TO GUIDE FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING

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include program design (e.g., the creation of models, protocols, tools and materials), project management, professional development, school-based coaching, creation of local and national networks, and collective impact and program evaluation. We have worked at the intersection of schools and communities for nearly 40 years, solving critical issues in education, health and youth development through projects in 48 states and with more than 400 school districts. Our staff are experts in education, health services, youth development, gender, school improvement, nutrition, communications, research and evaluation, technology and advocacy.

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## 2. Guest Speakers

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### 2.1 Overview

#### What Are Guest Speaker Visits?

Guest speaker visits are typically early career awareness activities, at least in part because they involve less student preparation and easier employer recruitment than some other forms of WBL. They are also well-suited to be younger students' first introduction to WBL and build awareness in many students at one time. Guest speakers can enhance the relevance of classroom learning and broaden student awareness of potential careers and the education and training required to enter them.

Recruiting employers to be guest speakers can be a first step toward lasting partnerships, often resulting in employer participation in additional speaking engagements or other WBL activities. Guest speakers may also be invited from colleges to help build awareness of the kinds of programs they offer, application requirements, costs and financial aid, and what it is like to be a college student.

#### Which Students Attend Presentations by Guest Speakers?

Guest speakers are suitable for all grade levels, because the content of presentations can be tailored to the students. For students in the middle grades and early high school, guest speakers are typically asked to talk broadly about their industries, organizations, and careers. In the later years of high school, guest speakers can provide more in-depth information about specific careers and the education and training required for them as well as how classroom learning can be applied to real-world careers. Often, a presentation can be replicated with different classes or modified for use in other grade levels.

#### How Are Guest Speaker Visits Structured?

Guest speakers typically address one classroom of students for about one hour or one class period, but they can extend longer and expand the student audience, perhaps using the school auditorium or gym to combine several classes. Another option is for a panel of speakers from different employers in similar industries to provide multiple perspectives in one visit. While each speaking engagement should be tailored to students' interests, host teacher expectations, and employer preferences, a sample outline for a presentation is provided below:

- Introduction of guest speaker (or panel).
- Description of the careers available in the industry and organization (perhaps using labor market data or other local information) and what kinds of work employees in those careers do.
- Introduction to the skills, education, and preparation required for such careers.
- Description of guest speaker's personal education and career path.
- Discussion of typical compensation and benefit packages for entry-level and more senior positions.
- Question and answer period.

WBL coordinators should map out a series of guest speaker visits to expose students to a range of industries or occupations during the academic year. The topics should reflect students' interests and be timed to align with the school's curricula. Knowing ahead of time when representatives of specific industries/occupations should be scheduled for guest speaker appearances makes it easier to target which employers to invite and to time the requests. WBL coordinators should review the *Introduction* to this manual for more information on employer recruitment.

## 2.2 How to Implement Guest Speaker Visits

Successful guest speaker activities require collaboration, communication, and preparation by several stakeholders. The process involves preparing students to be ready to learn and participate in the activity, helping teachers work with students to get the most from the experience, and preparing the speakers to be able to communicate effectively with students, anticipate the questions they are likely to be asked, and learn about the next generation of potential employees.

The work entailed in organizing a guest speaker visit (or speaker series) can extend over a period of months. As noted in the *Introduction* section, the following steps should be followed when organizing a guest speaker visit:

1. Identify the stakeholders needed to assist with implementing guest speaker visits. Typically, these will be school-based staff and employers.
2. Secure agreement from school administrators and teachers to assist in hosting guest speakers. Solicit their preferences for scheduling and for the classes and grade levels that will make up the student audiences.
3. Collect information on students' career interests. This may be done by teachers, counselors, or career advisors.
4. Based on students' interests, identify employers to ask to provide guest speakers. Employer recruitment can take time, so start early.
5. Prepare students for the guest speaker.
6. Prepare the speaker.
7. Conduct the guest speaker visit. Document it with photos, as appropriate.
8. Provide structured opportunities for students to reflect.
9. Obtain evaluations from students and the speaker.
10. Thank the guest speaker and school hosts. Give recognition to all participating stakeholders.

The following pages provide more detailed descriptions of steps that should be taken to implement a well-organized guest speaker series. These steps are presented in the form of a time line, starting months before the actual event. The time line is flexible and can be condensed, but proper student and employer preparation is important.

## 2.3 Suggested Implementation Time Line

Note: Throughout this manual, the term WBL coordinator (typically, a district or school staff member) is used to refer to the individual responsible for planning and implementing WBL activities. Depending on the activity and context, stakeholders from school sites (counselors, teachers, and administrative staff) may be involved. The WBL coordinator should be sure to use the WBL database, as described in the *Introduction*, to track employer and school contact information as well as the tasks each has agreed to carry out with respect to the guest speaker series.

The WBL coordinator should refer to the overall WBL plan (see *Introduction*), if there is one, to ensure that the scheduling of guest speakers from specific employers for students from a particular school is coordinated with the implementation of other WBL activities planned for that employer or that school. Both the employers and the school staff will appreciate it if the WBL coordinator initiates contact for guest speakers in that larger context.

While the steps for implementing a guest speaker series are more straightforward and less time-consuming than for some other WBL activities, it is important to get a schedule in place early in the school year. Once the target speaker topics and approximate dates are known, the WBL coordinator can recruit the speakers and get the events

on their schedules well ahead of time. The more detailed preparation tasks, such as working with the speakers on the content of their presentations, can be completed with shorter lead times.

Note: The WBL coordinator is assumed to be responsible for completing or assigning the tasks described below, except as noted otherwise.

### Early in the school year

- Reach out to school administrators and teachers to enlist their participation in scheduling a series of guest speakers (or a single visit).
- Working with teachers and counselors, collect information on students' career interests and teachers' ideas on careers that relate most closely to the curricula.
- Map out potential guest speaker topics and a tentative schedule. Identify presentation topics by week or month during the year. Be sure to include as wide a range of employer types as possible. Specifying the date and time of the presentation (e.g., 3<sup>rd</sup> period, 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.) can assist when recruiting speakers, although it is best to offer a few scheduling options for each potential speaker.
- Find out school policies and procedures for visitors.

### Three months before the guest speaker visit

Note: These steps can be completed early in the school year for the full calendar of speaker appearances or on a rolling basis for speaker slots in the coming months.

- Review the employer outreach information in the *Introduction* to this manual.
- Using the WBL database and other resources, identify employers or occupations in the local area that align with student interests and school curricula. In rural areas with few employers, matching student interests with speaker candidates may be especially challenging.
- Begin outreach to targeted employers based on the presentation topics. Sample communications for employer recruitment can be found in the *Resources* section. Be as specific as possible about what is requested and what is expected of guest speakers. Make it as easy as possible for the employer to say "yes."
- Follow up on introductory invitations with phone calls, as needed. Use the WBL database to identify past guest speakers or other employers who may reinforce the invitation with a peer-to-peer communication such as the one provided in the *Resources* section.
- As responses come in, confirm the dates and topics and communicate the confirmations to the schools and the speakers.
- Continue speaker recruitment, as needed, until all the targeted slots are filled.

### One month before the guest speaker visit

- Reconfirm the speaker engagement, especially if the initial scheduling was done earlier in the school year.
- Start preparing the speaker.
  - Schedule a 15- to 20-minute phone call or in-person meeting to discuss arrangements for the presentation. See the *Resources* section for a useful checklist to use for employer preparation.
  - Familiarize the speaker with his/her audience and its level of knowledge: number of students; grade and class; students' career interests; curricula that pertain to speaker's industry/occupation; etc.
  - Discuss how to target a presentation to a student audience, with particular attention to the kinds of questions students will ask. (Example: Students will usually ask what the speaker earns; knowing that enables him or her to decide how to answer.)

- Suggest ways the presentation can be made lively and interesting through use of technology or visual aids. Use examples from previous well-received guest speakers.
- Ask the speaker for a bio and get permission to share it with the students.
- Ask the speaker to send the presentation in advance, if possible, so that you can help him or her do any fine-tuning that may be needed to engage the student audience.
- Advise the speaker of any school-required visitor or security procedures.
- Ask the speaker to specify any needs for audio-visual or other equipment and make sure the school can accommodate the request(s).
- Obtain permission to photograph or record the speaker, if desired.
- **(Teachers)**<sup>1</sup> Introduce students to:
  - Strategies for listening, taking notes, and asking questions.
  - The speaker’s industry/employer/occupation.
  - Other curricular materials that may be relevant to the speaker’s occupation.

### One week before the guest speaker visit

- Reconfirm the date, time, and location with the guest speaker by phone or email. Offer to answer questions. Provide directions to the school and parking information along with an emergency contact in case the speaker is delayed or lost. Include instructions for entering the school and reporting to the main office. Offer to print any handouts the speaker may wish to use.
- Reconfirm the school site arrangements: time; date; place; equipment needs; etc. Arrange for a student to greet the speaker in the main office and escort him or her to the classroom.
- **(Teachers)** Complete students’ preparation by reviewing information about the speaker and his or her employer and distributing his or her bio. Review listening and note-taking tips.

### One day before the guest speaker visit

- Touch base with guest speaker and school site coordinator to address any last-minute questions.
- **(Teachers)** Remind students about the speaker and his or her organization and about proper behavior during the presentation. Introduce the information collection form, a sample of which is in the *Resources* section.

### Day of the guest speaker visit

- Set up equipment for presentation, if needed.
- Distribute student information collection sheets.

### One day to one week after the guest speaker visit

- Send thank-you email to speaker with the speaker evaluation form and request that it be completed and returned.
- Distribute, collect, and review student evaluations.
- Review speaker’s evaluation form and follow up on any issues raised. Make note in the WBL database of favorable speaker evaluations and follow up with employers who indicated their willingness to participate in future WBL activities.
- Share a summary or samples of student reflections with the speaker to illustrate his/her impact on students’ thinking about careers.
- **(Teachers)** Conduct reflection activities in class and compile written reflections for dissemination to all participating students (and their teachers).

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<sup>1</sup> The term “teachers” should be taken to include counselors, career advisors, and other educators working directly with students.

- Include discussions about the guest speaker's presentation as well as a guided written reflection on the experience.
- Consider using the same form of reflection for each guest speaker throughout the year.
- **(Teachers)** Have students write thank-you notes to the speaker. Each student's note should describe how the presentation was valuable and what he/she learned. The notes should be reviewed by the teacher before they are sent. If the speaker's audience was more than one class, send a representative sample of the thank-you notes so as not to inundate the speaker.

## 2.4 Resources for Guest Speaker Activities

Note: These forms can be printed with expanded space for written responses or adapted in other ways.

### WBL coordinator:

- Outreach email to employer
- Email from one employer to another
- Participation form

### Employer/speaker:

- Checklist/expectations
- Evaluation

### Student:

- Form for taking notes and recording observations
- Evaluation

## Sample Email to Employers from WBL Coordinator

Good Morning,

My name is John Doe, and I work for the XYZ Public Schools (or name of specific school). Students from (list name of school) are seeking guest speakers to address their class about your organization and the potential careers it offers.

Guest speakers are part of a larger continuum of work-based learning opportunities designed to help students gain experience and insight into real-world careers. These activities help students set education and career goals and learn what it takes to prepare for careers.

Typically lasting for an hour or one class period, a guest speaker presentation is a small investment of your time that may make a real difference in the students' futures. I hope to schedule your visit for (date) at (time), but we could identify other options if necessary. Your audience will be about ## #th-grade (subject) students. I have attached a participation form for you to complete and return to accept this invitation. Please contact me at (list phone number) or (list email) if you have questions.

If you are unable to be a guest speaker, but would like to learn more about other opportunities to work with students by hosting job shadows, workplace tours, or internships, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you,

John Doe, Title  
XYZ Public Schools (or name of specific school)  
Contact information

## Sample Email for Employers to Forward to Others

Good Morning,

My name is Jane Doe, and I lead the marketing and communications department for (Blue Star Telephone Company). (Blue Star) has been working with students from (XYZ district or school) for (how long?) and would like to encourage you to provide guest speakers for local schools. We've found it's a rewarding experience for our employees as well as a good form of early recruitment for Blue Star.

The XYZ school district (or school name) is seeking guest speakers. Addressing a class will help broaden student awareness of potential careers in your industry. Typically lasting for an hour or one class period, a guest speaker presentation is a small investment of your time that may well influence students' future choices. For more information, please see the attached participation form or contact (WBL coordinator name, email, and phone). (WBL coordinator name) will be happy to work with you to plan a presentation that will be convenient for you and of great benefit to students.

If you have questions, please feel free to contact (WBL coordinator name) or me at any time.

Thank you,

Jane Doe, Title  
Organization  
Contact information

**Guest Speaker Participation Form** (WBL coordinator to fill in own name and contact information)

XYZ High School has a #th-grade (subject) class that would like you to speak about your organization and potential careers. Guest speakers add relevance to classroom learning and are an important part of a multi-year program that enables students to learn about career opportunities and the education required to pursue them.

Presentation details:

- (Date), from X:XX a.m. to X:XX a.m. (Other schedule options may be available.)
- #th- grade (subject) class of ## students
- Topic of interest:

Please complete the following information and return it to (WBL coordinator name) by (response date). Please contact (him or her) if you have any questions. (He or she) will confirm your participation and send you more information to help you prepare.

Company/organization:	
Industry/business type:	
Address:	
Main contact name:	Title:
Phone:	Email:
Speaker name and contact information (if different from main contact):	
Please specify any audio-visual or other equipment needs:	
Signature:	
Work-based learning (WBL) coordinator name, phone, and email:	

Your support of work-based learning opportunities is a valuable complement to classroom learning and truly helps shape the lives of our students. Thank you!

**Speaker Checklist/Expectations** (Top part to be completed by the WBL coordinator.)

To help you prepare, we have created the following checklist of what is usually expected from guest speakers. Please contact me with any questions. Thank you for agreeing to be a guest speaker at (list school name).

Speaker name and title:	Organization:
Date of guest speaker presentation:	Arrival time:
Location and room number:	Length of presentation:
Where to park:	
Procedures for entering school:	
Audio-visual or other equipment to be provided at the school:	
Work-based learning (WBL) coordinator name, phone, and email:	
School contact name, phone, and email:	

Expectations:	Check:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Speak or meet with the WBL coordinator to discuss the content of your presentation, including tips for making it interesting and informative for #th-grade students. This typically takes 15-20 minutes.</li> <li>2. Your presentation should include a personal introduction and a description of your personal career path as well as information about the industry you work in, the organization you work for, and the education and training required to prepare for careers in your field. Based on your conversation with the coordinator, you may be able to make direct connections between classroom curricula and how they are applied in your work. You should plan to speak for about (## minutes) and allow (## minutes) for students to ask questions.</li> <li>3. If possible, please share your presentation materials with the WBL coordinator, so that he/she can make sure the students are prepared ahead of time. If you have handouts to be copied, please provide those ahead of time as well.</li> <li>4. Please provide a biographical summary so that you can be introduced properly.</li> <li>5. The teacher or another school staff member will remain in the classroom during the presentation to assist with classroom management, if needed.</li> <li>6. Students will be prepared with information about you and questions to ask.</li> <li>7. It will be very helpful if you would complete the enclosed evaluation of your experience as a guest speaker within a few days after your presentation and return it to the WBL coordinator.</li> </ol> <p>Thank you very much for agreeing to serve as a guest speaker. Please contact the WBL coordinator at any time with questions or concerns. It is part of his/her job to make sure everything goes smoothly.</p>	

**Guest Speaker Evaluation Form** (WBL coordinator to pre-fill own name and contact information)

Thank you for taking the time to speak to (name of class and school) on (date). Your participation helps students make better-informed decisions regarding their future careers. Your feedback is valuable to ensuring high quality experiences for future speakers and our students. Please take a few minutes to complete this form and return it to (whom and where) at your earliest convenience.

Your name:	Phone number:
Title:	Email:
Organization:	Industry:
Work-based learning coordinator name and contact information:	

Please evaluate the guest speaker event in each of the following areas.

LOGISTICS				
Communication about the presentation and expectations	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Ease of participation	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Overall coordination	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
STUDENTS				
Students were prepared with questions	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Students behaved appropriately	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
OVERALL EVALUATION				
Guest speaker experience	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable

Would you be willing to be a guest speaker again in the future? YES NO

Would you be willing to participate in other work-based learning activities, such as workplace tours, career fairs, informational interviews, job shadows, or internships? Please note any that are of interest in the comment section below. Someone will contact you to follow up.

Please use the space below to provide additional comments about your experience. Please make note of any ways the coordinator could have helped you be better prepared.

## Guest Speaker Student Notes and Observations Form

Speaker Information	
Name of speaker:	Job title of speaker:
Organization where speaker works:	Date of guest speaker visit:
Speaker's education and training history:	
Speaker's career history:	

Careers Available in Speaker's Field
What kinds of careers are available in this organization or field?
What kinds of things do employees in these careers do?

Career Potential
What would I need to get a job in this field? (education/training/background experience)
What would I need to get ahead in this career?
What is the outlook for this career?
What are the potential salary ranges for this career? (entry level and top level)

Observations
What did you learn that was surprising?
How will this experience inform your future education or career plans?
Use this space for additional notes.

## Student Evaluation of Guest Speaker

Thank you for participating in the guest speaker visit by (name). Your feedback is important! Please complete the form and return it to your teacher.

Student name:	Name of guest speaker:
Date of guest speaker visit:	Guest speaker's organization:

Please evaluate the experience in each of the following areas.

GUEST SPEAKER				
Speaker was interesting	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
Speaker answered questions	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable
INFORMATION				
I found the information useful	Yes		No	
Are you more or less interested in careers in the speaker's field after listening?	More		Less	
OVERALL EVALUATION				
Guest speaker experience	Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Below Expectations	Not Applicable

Would you recommend this guest speaker for other classes? Circle one. YES NO

What did you find most interesting about the speaker's presentation and why?

What did you find least interesting about the speaker's presentation and why?

Did the presentation help you decide which career(s) you are interested in learning more about or identify careers in which you have no interest? Explain.

Do you have ideas for other guest speakers we could invite to make presentations? Please provide additional comments below.