



## **STEM BEST® Program**

### **Businesses Engaging Students and Teachers**

#### **WORK-BASED LEARNING (WBL)**

Career-related education provides age-appropriate experiences which prepare students for future work-based learning experiences. It is appropriate to think about career awareness and related instruction for younger students as a preparatory step to career education which often is formalized and even mandated by school code during the middle/junior high school years.

**Structured and authentic learning experiences:** High-quality work-based learning (WBL) consists of structured learning opportunities, authentic work experiences, including hands-on projects, internships, externships, pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships focused on high-demand fields. WBL should help students gain understanding of the career-related value of their education and improve skills and self-confidence.

**School-business partnerships scale up WBL over time:** High-quality WBL should build on a continuum of career awareness, exploration, preparation and education/training activities that are interconnected. WBL experiences should be sustained through active involvement and guidance from industry professionals in real workplace settings or simulated workplace scenarios.

**Clear work-based learning partnership agreement and value for all participants:** Partnerships should add value for all participants, including improving academic achievement and furthering success in post-secondary education and careers. Formal agreements between various participants delineate roles, responsibilities and required and expected outcomes. Student work plans should clearly identify targeted skills and how skill competencies will be measured.

High-quality WBL includes critical partners across the education and training spectrum. It focuses on continuous improvement and sharing of best practices. High-quality WBL incorporates industry and other partner resources – including a cost-share component – and includes a sustainability plan.

[Adapted for Iowa from “*Defining High Quality Work-Based Learning in Iowa*,” a product of the National Governors Association Work-Based Learning Policy Academy Grant Core Team, February 15, 2017.]