



West Allegheny School District

ACCELERATE Handbook

A Tradition of Excellence...A Vision for Tomorrow

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Introduction

West Allegheny School District is dedicated to preparing every student to be career & college-ready with a viable post-secondary plan upon graduation. To support this goal, a diverse portfolio of course offerings has been strategically developed to align course opportunities to high-demand career fields. Our Early College in High School Academy (ECIHS) was launched in 2018 connecting students to certificate and associate degree programs and has since expanded to provide more opportunities for our students through 5 higher-education institutions offering students 25 programs in career fields of high interest with an increase in demand. This innovative model provides West Allegheny students access to college courses while in high school through concurrent and/or dual enrollment.

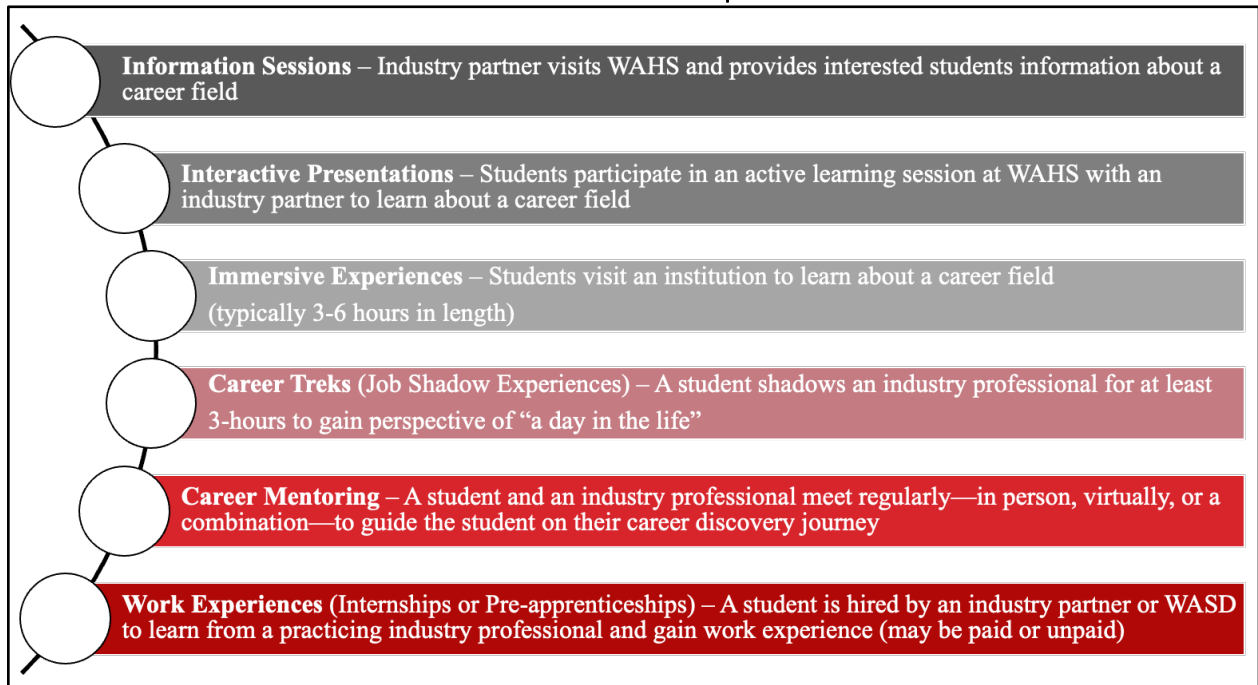
West Allegheny Career and College Pathways

Beyond our ECIHSA program, West Allegheny strives to connect every student with a viable post-secondary plan that they can begin after graduation. To guide students on this journey, we ask students to identify a primary career and college pathway from our six that are each aligned to at least one of the Pennsylvania Career Clusters.

Arts, Communications and Hospitality <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arts, A/V Technology & Communication• Hospitality & Tourism	Business Administration and Finance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business & Administration• Finance & Insurance• Marketing Sales & Service	Education, Human and Public Services <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government & Public Administration• Law & Public Safety• Education & Training• Human Services
Engineering, Manufacturing Technology and Trades <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Architecture & Construction• Manufacturing• Transportation, Distribution, & Logistics• Scientific Research/Engineering	Health and Natural Sciences <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health Science• Agriculture, Food & Natural Resource	Information Technology <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information Technology

In 2022, we added an additional layer of support for students in their quest to find a Career Pathway for their future known as ACCELERATE (Advancing Career Connections through Experiential Learning & Exposure to Real-world Application, Training, & Exploration). Our continuum of experiences allows our students to engage with career exposure, exploration, and work experiences, we are demystifying the career fields in which our students have expressed interest.

Continuum of Career Experiences



Information Sessions

An Information Session provides any interested student with an opportunity to learn about an industry or program from professionals in the field. These engagements allow students to gain insights directly from professionals, ask questions, and learn about the various opportunities and requirements within the industry. By participating in these sessions, students can better understand the practical aspects of different career paths, making informed decisions about their future education and career choices.

Interactive Presentations

Interactive Presentations are dynamic offerings where students engage in active learning sessions with an industry partner. During these sessions, students have the opportunity to interact with professionals, ask questions, and participate in hands-on activities that provide a deeper understanding of the career field. These presentations are designed to be engaging and informative, allowing students to experience real-world applications of the concepts they are learning. By actively participating, students can gain practical insights and develop a clearer vision of potential career paths, making these sessions a valuable component of their educational journey.

Immersive Experiences

Immersive Experiences are designed to provide students with a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of a particular career field by visiting an institution where that field is practiced. These visits, typically lasting between three to six hours, allow students to explore various aspects of a profession, gaining valuable insights and knowledge through direct exposure. During an Immersive Experience, students tour the institution, observing the work environment and the roles of different professionals within the organization. They participate in interactive sessions, workshops, or demonstrations that illustrate key concepts, techniques, and technologies used in

the field. These activities are often guided by experienced professionals who provide detailed explanations and answer students' questions, offering a clearer picture of the day-to-day operations and challenges of the career.

Career Treks

Career Treks, also known as Job Shadow Experiences, provide students with an opportunity to observe and participate in the daily activities of a seasoned industry professional. By spending at least three hours shadowing a professional, students gain firsthand insight into the responsibilities, challenges, and rewards associated with a particular career. This real-world exposure allows the student to see beyond theoretical knowledge and understand the practical applications of their studies. They witness the decision-making processes, problem-solving techniques, and interpersonal dynamics that are integral to the professional's role. Career Treks also offer networking opportunities, as students often interact with other professionals within the organization. These connections can lead to future internships, mentorships, or job opportunities, further supporting the student's career growth.

Overall, Career Treks are an enriching experience that bridges the gap between education and employment. They empower students with the knowledge and confidence to pursue their career goals, equipped with a realistic understanding of what it takes to thrive in their chosen profession.

Career Mentoring

Career mentoring is a dynamic and impactful relationship where a seasoned industry professional offers their expertise, insights, and guidance to a student who is navigating the early stages of their career. This partnership is designed to be flexible and accommodating, allowing meetings to occur in person, virtually, or through a blend of both methods, ensuring accessibility and convenience for both parties involved. Students benefit from the mentor's wealth of experience, gaining clarity and confidence in their career choices. They learn to set realistic goals, make informed decisions, and develop strategies to overcome potential challenges. Regular interactions with the mentor help the student to refine their interests and align their academic pursuits with their professional aspirations.

Work Experience through Internships

One of the most beneficial components of ACCELERATE are internships. An internship is a highly structured, sustained professional learning experience in which students work closely with an industry professional for a defined period of time at an established workplace to participate in and observe meaningful, practical work related to a student's field of study or career interest. Gaining real-world experience through an internship during high school can provide numerous benefits to students. By participating in an internship, students have the opportunity to explore potential career paths, develop valuable skills, and build a professional network. Internships allow students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to practical, hands-on situations, providing a deeper understanding of their field of interest. Additionally, internships can help students stand out on college applications and resumes, showing future employers and admissions officers their commitment to their chosen field. Students must apply, interview, and

be accepted into internship positions. More information about this process can be found under the Application Process section of this handbook.

All internships connected to West Allegheny School District through the ACCELERATE program will be included on the student's West Allegheny transcript. Students who participate in an internship and complete a set number of hours will be awarded elective credit and a Pass/Fail grade. The table below outlines hours-credits alignment up to 1-credit with the same pattern to be extended beyond 1-credit.

Hours	Credits
0-29	No credit
30-59	0.25
60-89	0.50
90-119	0.75
120-149	1.00

Students in grades nine through eleven may complete up to one internship credit during the school year (August-May). Students in grade 12 may complete up to four internship credits during the school year (August-May). All students may complete additional internship credits during the summer, as approved by a school official.

Delineating between Internships and Independent Studies

The Independent Study Program is designed to meet the needs of junior and senior students who have exhausted the options in a particular curriculum area or desire to pursue course work not offered within the available course offerings. An Independent Study is an academic course developed between a student and teacher and approved by a high school administrator. To be eligible for an Independent Study, a student must be on track to meet all requirements for graduation. Independent Study courses cannot be taken in place of a required or existing.

Internships differ from Independent Studies by allowing students the opportunity to apply the learning they have received, gain experience in the workforce, and learn from practicing industry professionals. West Allegheny School District offers several internships on-site and is continuing to develop new internships as interests and needs are identified. Additionally, West Allegheny partners with local businesses to develop internship opportunities for students. When possible, the internships will be paid. All paid West Allegheny internal internships will be \$11/hour. The pay rate for any internship offered through a partner will be established by the partner.

Eligibility for an Internship

To be eligible for an internship, a student must be a West Allegheny student in good standing academically, behaviorally, and maintain positive attendance. All interns must be at least 14 years of age. For interns under the age of 18, a work permit must be on file. All internships will be in accordance with the state work regulations for minors.

Maximum Hours of Work for Minors

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Working hour restrictions limit how many hours a minor may work per day, and per week.

For Minors Under 16:

During a school week, 4 hours of work are permitted per school day (up to 8 on a non-school day) and up to 18 hours per week. 8 hours of work per day, 44 hours per week are permitted when school is off.

For Minors Ages 16 and 17:

8 hours of work per day, 44 per week, 6 days out of the week are permitted. A maximum of 28 hours of work are permitted during a school week, if enrolled in regular day school.

Nightwork Restrictions for Minors

Nightwork restrictions set limits on how late a minor can legally work.

For Minors Under 16:

Work is prohibited during these hours: 7 p.m. (10 p.m. during vacation from June to Labor Day) to 7 a.m.

For Minors Ages 16 and 17:

Work is prohibited during these hours: 12 p.m. (1 a.m. before non-school day) to 6 a.m., if enrolled in regular day school.

Prior to being offered an internship, a student must complete the appropriate internship application and participate in the interview process. Please note that priority for internships will be given to students with aligned career paths and coursework.

Internship Objectives

The student will

- Gain practical skills in the field to build an understanding of the knowledge and skills required in the industry.
- Develop professional relationships and a network of support.
- Apply the knowledge gained through course work at West Allegheny to support the organization in which they are working.
- Develop an understanding of the duties, responsibilities, and qualifications needed to work in the career field.
- Acquire and apply critical thinking skills and effective communication skills.

Application Process

Current West Allegheny High School students in good standing are welcome to apply for a posted internship position. Student's attendance, discipline, and grades will be reviewed as part of the application screening. Once the interview team has reviewed all applications, the selected candidates will receive an email detailing the interview time and location. Each interview is estimated to last between 10 and 20 minutes. Following the interview process, students will be notified via email of the results of their interview along with growth feedback.

Starting with the 2025-26 school year, senior and junior students may submit a Student Internship Proposal during the scheduling window. This new process will allow students to add additional hands-on learning experience aligned to their career goal(s). The form can be accessed by scanning or clicking the QR code below.



Expectations

To excel in an internship, it is crucial to always embody professionalism. This includes dressing appropriately, arriving on time or meeting project deadlines, taking initiative, communicating effectively, and showing respect to colleagues. Professionalism also involves being reliable, maintaining a positive attitude, completing tasks diligently, and seeking feedback for improvement. Interns should always work to demonstrate a strong work ethic by being proactive, seeking out new tasks, and asking for clarification when needed. It is crucial to communicate effectively with supervisors and colleagues, ask questions when unsure, and be open to feedback for growth and improvement. Additionally, maintaining confidentiality and demonstrating respect for all team members are essential components of a successful internship experience. It is important to remember that throughout your internship you are working to build a strong reputation along with develop essential skills for your future career endeavors.

Orientation

All successful candidates will participate in an internship specific orientation at the start of the internship. During the orientation the logistics of the internship will be explained. Interns will be able to ask any additional questions they may have. All interns will be required to complete an Internship Agreement Form and Internship Timesheet. Paid internship will also be required to complete the appropriate payroll documents.

Internship Agreement Form

All interns will be expected to complete and submit the Internship Agreement Form (Appendix A) before the scheduled orientation.

Internship Timesheet

All interns will be required to keep an electronic timesheet (Appendix B) that will be shared with the internship direct supervisor and the program director.

Payroll Documents

In the case that an internship is paid, the intern should submit the required payroll documentation before the first day of the internship. For West Allegheny internal internships this includes: USCIS I-9 Form, W-4 IRS Form, Earned Income Tax Form and an electronic timesheet (Appendix B). For internships paid by an industry partner, the student is expected to adhere to their payroll process.

Reflective Practice

Being a reflective practitioner is essential to professional growth. As such, each intern will be expected to complete monthly and end of term reflections. These reflections will be completed using the corresponding reflection sheet (APPENDIX C and D). Reflective practice involves critically analyzing one's experiences during the internship, identifying strengths and areas for growth, and making intentional adjustments for professional development. By engaging in reflective practice, students in internships will enhance their self-awareness, learn from their successes and challenges, and continuously improve their skills and performance in a real-world work setting.

Glossary of Terms

Career Mentoring – A structured partnership between a student and an industry professional that includes regular scheduled meeting—in person, virtually, or a combination—to guide the student on their career discovery journey.

Career Trek (Job Shadow Experience) – A student shadows an industry professional for at least 3 hours to gain perspective of “a day in the life”

Credited Internship – An internship that consists of at least 30 hours

External Internship/Pre-apprenticeship – An internship or pre-apprenticeship supervised by an Industry Partner who collaborates with West Allegheny school official

Immersive Experience – Students visit an institution to learn about a career field (typically 3-6 hours in length)

Independent Study – An academic course developed between a student and teacher that is designed to meet the needs of junior and senior students who have exhausted the options in a particular curriculum area or desire to pursue coursework not offered within the available course offerings. Student must be on track to meet all requirements for graduation and cannot replace a required or existing course offered. Requires administrative approval.

Information Session – An event that occurs at WAHS in which an industry partner provides a group of students with information about their industry and related career fields. Students typically register in advance for these events.

Interactive Presentation – An event that occurs at WAHS in which an industry partner or institute of higher education engages a group of students in an active learning experience about an industry and related career fields. Students typically register in advance for these events.

Internship – A highly structured, sustained professional learning experience in which students work closely with an industry professional for a defined period of time at an established workplace to participate in and observe meaningful, practical work related to a student's field of

study or career interest. Students must apply and interview for internships. All internships will occur outside of a student's scheduled classes

Non-credited Internship – An internship that consists of less than 30 hours

Paid Internship – An internship that provides students with a wage or a stipend for hours worked

Pre-apprenticeship – A program or set of strategies designed to prepare individuals for entry into Registered Apprenticeship Programs (RAP) or other job opportunities. Pre-apprenticeships may last from a few weeks to a few months and may or may not include wages or stipend.

Unpaid Internship – An internship that does not offer students monetary compensation for hours worked but may include elective course credit

Work Experiences – Internships or Pre-apprenticeships where a student is hired by an industry partner or WASD to learn from a practicing industry professional and gain work experience (may be paid or unpaid). Students must apply and interview for these experiences.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Internship Agreement Form

APPENDIX B: Internship Time Log

APPENDIX C: Monthly Reflection

APPENDIX D: End of Term Reflection

Internship Agreement Form



Student Information:

Name	Anticipated Graduation Year
Pathway	Current Career Goal
Phone Number	Driving Status
Parent/Guardian Name	Parent Phone and Email

Internship Information:

Title	Location
Direct Supervisor Name	Supervisor Title/Position
Phone Number	Site Address

Internship Expectations:

Time Commitment (hours)	Credits to be earned
Start Date	End Date
Hourly Wage (if paid)	Anticipated Schedule

Internship Goals:

1.
2.
3.

Signatures of Agreement:

Student Signature	Student Name	Date
Direct Internship Supervisor Signature	Direct Supervisor Name	Date
Parent/Guardian Signature	Parent/Guardian Name	Date
Director of Special Project Signature	Dr. Katharine Roche	Date

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APPENDIX B: Internship Time Log



WEST ALLEGHENY SCHOOL DISTRICT		FROM:	
		TO:	
INTERNSHIP TIMESHEET		PAY DATE:	
NAME:			
TIME:	EXAMPLE: 1.5 HOURS		
DAY OF WEEK	DATE	HOURS	NOTES
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			
TOTAL TIME WORKED			
RATE/HOUR		\$11.00	
TOTAL			
APPROVED BY:			
DATE:			

Unless otherwise approved, interns should keep an electronic timesheet (shared by Dr. Roche at the internship orientation).

APPENDIX C: Monthly Reflection



Student Name		Direct Supervisor Name	
Internship	Date	Hours Completed	
<p>As you reflect on your internship thus far, please describe in detail how you are progressing towards the goals you set in the beginning.</p>			
<p>As you reflect on your internship thus far, please describe in detail any challenges you have faced and how you persevered or grown from these experiences.</p>			
<p>Please describe how this experience in helping you prepare for your future goals.</p>			
<p>Please identify a goal for the next month of this internship.</p>			

APPENDIX D: End of Term Reflection

Student Name		Direct Supervisor Name	
Internship	Date	Hours Completed	
Internship Goal 1			
Please reflect on Goal 1. Do you feel you successfully met your goal? How do you feel your growth in this area has helped you grow as a person?			
Internship Goal 2			
Please reflect on Goal 2. Do you feel you successfully met your goal? How do you feel your growth in this area has helped you grow as a person?			
Internship Goal 3			
Please reflect on Goal 3. Do you feel you successfully met your goal? How do you feel your growth in this area has helped you grow as a person?			
As you reflect on your internship, please describe in detail any challenges you have faced and how you persevered or grew from these experiences.			
Please describe how this experience has helped you prepare for your future goals.			
Please share any suggestions for improving the internship experience at West Allegheny.			