

Warren County Business Advisory Council (WCBAC) Kickoff Summary

The inaugural meeting of the Warren County Business Advisory Council (WCBAC) was an energizing success, highlighting how one school is using lessons from a recent Germany and Switzerland industry/educator trip to rethink work-based learning. Discussions focused on how schools and employers can collaborate to create meaningful, scalable, and sustainable experiences across sectors.

Advanced Manufacturing

Key Themes

- **In-School Engagement:** Companies like McDonald's and Papa John's model bringing trainers into schools to provide authentic workplace exposure.
- **Hands-On Learning:** Students benefit from tactile projects (e.g., building with Legos or assembling small parts) that mirror real-world manufacturing processes.
- **Beyond Workforce Development:** Efforts should benefit both students and companies—reducing 'company fatigue' by spreading opportunities across partners.
- **Skill Translation:** Encourage students to articulate what they learn ('I worked under pressure,' 'I handled logistics,' etc.) to connect experience with employability skills.
- **Soft Skills & Certifications:** Employers value communication, teamwork, and problem solving; a certification validating these skills could support 'priority hire' status.
- **Practical Ideas:** Outsourcing small build projects to schools; leveraging tools like YouScience and OhioMeansJobs to align student learning.

Emerging Need: Develop a system to certify transferable technical and soft skills while simplifying company engagement through streamlined logistics and shared resources.

Travel & Tourism

Key Themes

- **Unified Structure:** Create one central point of contact and a cross-county team to coordinate standardized internship pathways and universal forms.
- **Company Support:** Establish liaisons who help businesses design meaningful experiences and understand the value of work-based learning.
- **Early Engagement:** Involve students at younger ages to build awareness and enthusiasm for the industry.
- **Reducing Fatigue:** A shared database or 'hub' of vetted companies and students prevents duplication and simplifies matching.
- **Soft Skills Focus:** Reinforce professionalism, communication, and customer service through mentoring and certification.

Emerging Need: Develop a countywide system to connect schools and employers efficiently, ensuring consistency, quality, and sustainability in work-based learning placements.

Information Technology

Key Themes

- **Barriers:** Security and cyber liability concerns limit access for students.
- **AI Integration:** Educators and industry are misaligned—schools avoid AI while businesses embrace it for efficiency.
- **Collaboration Opportunity:** Convene meetings with IT teachers, education leaders, and business partners to explore safe and practical AI integration.
- **Curriculum Evolution:** Students need exposure to applied AI and cybersecurity before junior/senior year.
- **Industry Advocacy:** Businesses can advocate to revise outdated education policies that hinder innovation.
- **Personalized Learning:** Explore how AI can enhance individualized skill-building for students.

Emerging Need: Create an education-industry task force to define safe, practical uses of AI and align skill development with evolving industry needs.

Healthcare

Key Themes

- Participants discussed a range of in-school and internship models, from introductory exposure to more immersive experiences.
- Strong potential exists to expand structured partnerships blending technical training with soft skills and mentoring.

Emerging Need: Formalize healthcare pathways that allow students to progress from in-school exploration to clinical or shadow experiences supported by mentoring and certification options.

Next Steps

1. Continue Small Group Industry Sector subcommittees to refine these ideas into actionable goals.
2. Develop shared tools such as a centralized employer database, internship templates, and skill certification framework.
3. Promote cross-sector collaboration to ensure consistent communication and reduce the burden on participating companies.
4. Integrate lessons learned from European models emphasizing applied learning, student ownership, and sustainable business engagement.