



Memo

Date: October 2024

To: All Minnesota School Administrators

From:

- Sonia Smith, Director of Special Education, Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)
- Sally Reynolds, Director of Career and College Success Division, MDE
- Heidi Hamilton, Director, Disability Services Division, Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Dee Torgerson, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)
- Natasha Jerde, Director of State Services for the Blind (SSB)

RE: Increasing paid work experiences for students with disabilities

Vision

One outcome of [Minnesota's Youth in Transition Framework](#) is that youth with disabilities “find competitive integrated work they enjoy”. Research shows that early paid work experience is a primary predictor of post-school employment success for youth with disabilities (Mazzotti et al., 2016; Wehman et al., 2015). The [Work-Based Learning section](#) of the Framework emphasizes that we want all students to receive a [full range of work-based learning experiences](#) throughout high school and 18-22 transition programming which ultimately leads to competitive integrated work experience before graduation.

Thus, [E1MN](#) leaders at Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), and Department of Human Services (DHS) have a vision that:

All students with disabilities have paid [competitive integrated employment](#) (CIE) work experience prior to earning their high school diploma.

Key resources to support the vision

1. Schools supporting paid CIE work experience

School work-based learning programs are a primary way for students to get this work experience, and we ask that all school districts and charter schools have this option available to students with disabilities. If you need more information or assistance with developing or expanding school work-based learning programming, see [MDE's Work-Based Learning webpage](#).

2. VRS supporting paid CIE work experience

Students with disabilities enrolled in DEED's [Vocational Rehabilitation Services \(VRS\)](#) program can receive support in paid CIE work experience outside of school hours.

3. Waivers supporting paid CIE work experience

Students who have [Home and Community Based \(HCBS\) waivers](#) can get ongoing employment supports in paid CIE work experiences outside of school hours.

Next Step: E1MN Survey Coming

Management Analysis and Development (MAD) will be sending out a survey on our behalf to school administrators and staff which will allow E1MN leaders to understand how school work-based learning programs operate, and what school districts and charter schools need to support students with disabilities in obtaining and maintaining paid CIE work experience. From there, E1MN partners will develop and share a plan that moves us closer to the statewide vision.