

Spotlight on High School Internships

Opening Doors to In-Demand Skills,
Social Capital & Greater Career Certainty



SPOTLIGHT ON HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS

“*My internship helped me explore so many more careers. Being able to explore more helped me hone in on the right one for me.*”

12th-grader, Michigan

The average adult today will hold around twelve jobs in their lifetime.¹ Respective of the modern reality, we know that self-discovery is neither a one-time experience nor something that happens in a vacuum; it happens along a continuum with people learning incrementally more about themselves and their talents and interests well into adulthood. The career exploration experience in high school should reflect that same continuum. **Career exploration is not a simple aptitude test that you take, nor is it a single activity to be carried out during one year of high school.** Young people can get a head-start on understanding their own interests and abilities when they have the freedom to explore from an earlier age, the safety to fail repeatedly, and when they are aware of *all* the options in front of them for the future. Internships carried out in high school can be a valuable part of that experiential learning and can play a vital role in the way young people perceive and understand the working world, well before they feel the burdens of adulthood on their shoulders. Waiting until after high school to understand their career aptitude and to find the desired career path is simply not a sustainable plan, nor do most young adults

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have the financial flexibility to try and fail at higher education when the stakes (and the cost) are high. It is critical that students begin to plan and dream *early*, and act on those plans in order to get a head-start on their future.

Internships (both in-person and virtual) deserve strong consideration as part of any teenager’s experience as they make their way toward school completion and continue building their plan for the future.

Internships offer something classroom learning does not: the opportunity for real, competency-based and hands-on learning that is invaluable in preparing students for the realities of the working world. For many, internships offer the chance to earn money or school credit while learning about themselves and a prospective career. The skills built through an internship can offer a young person a chance to show prospective employers that they are interested in a field, have put in the work to be taken seriously, and have built the skills necessary to be successful. In addition, internships help students build the social capital that is vital to access the working world. With more than 40% of jobs coming through referrals and personal connections², it is critical that students have the opportunity to build that social capital from an early age.

To learn more about teens’ participation in high school internships, and specifically how the COVID-19 impact is changing what internships may look like in the future, American Student Assistance (ASA) conducted a survey of the 111 members of our Project Waypoint teen community. Specifically, this small body of research has given us insight into the pros and cons, as perceived by teenagers, of internships conducted remotely vs. on-site. Also referenced in this paper is data from our work with Skills for Rhode Island’s Future PrepareRI internship program, which featured a pool of nearly 500 internship-completing students, and which has offered rich insights into both the student and the employer perspective on internships as an avenue for career preparation and career readiness.

In spite of the value in internships, almost all of the sample of teens we spoke to have *not* completed an internship.³ And in a broader piece of research conducted among 840 high school students, just 2% held an internship.⁴ Why the lack of participation among high school students? For many, internships are seen as a college-level pursuit and therefore not even considered as a possibility for younger students.

It is critical that students have the opportunity to build social capital from an early age.



Some 33% of high school students who are not interested in pursuing an internship while in high school say that they don't think they need an internship experience until college.⁵ However, in many cases there are **systemic and structural barriers in place that limit access to internships for high school students**. These barriers include lack of participation from employers, labor laws that may be too restrictive for younger populations to join a work site, or internships that are offered for little to no pay or no school credit.

Logistics alone can severely limit a teenager's ability to participate in an internship.

Even when internship opportunities are available, high school students may have less flexibility in their daily timetable and often must work around the schedules of parents, siblings and school obligations. Around 25% of the high school students in our research who were not interested in a high school internship feel they

don't have enough time to complete one.⁶ Furthermore, most teenagers rely on family transportation to get them to a job site. For the traditional, on-site internship (and particularly when relocation is involved), logistics alone can severely limit a teenager's ability to participate if the timing conflicts with other family obligations. Transportation is also a problem from the employer's perspective; our research shows that their perception, whether accurate or not, is that reliable transportation will prove problematic—and in some cases will be the single biggest barrier—for high school interns.⁷ **Geographic equity also plays a role**, with young people in urban areas often having access to a wider range of internship opportunities than their rural or suburban counterparts. With a number of internship opportunities testing virtual models by necessity during the COVID-19 pandemic, however, we see a new and realistic avenue opening up that can empower teens to get a jump-start on workplace learning as they add an early career prep experience to their resume. However, this avenue only works if employers do their part to support such vital in-person and virtual workforce development opportunities.

A unique avenue for career exploration

There is no standard definition of an internship. In fact, as states seek to roll out work-based learning frameworks, many states define internships slightly differently. However, one such definition that is broadly encompassing of many others is from the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), which defines an internship as **“a professional learning experience that offers meaningful, practical work related to a student's field of study or career interest.** An internship gives a student the opportunity for career exploration and development, and to learn new skills. It offers the employer the opportunity to bring new ideas and energy into the workplace, develop talent, and potentially build a pipeline for future full-time employees.”

According to UMBC's definition, a high-quality internship:

- Consists of a part-time or full-time work schedule that includes **no more than 25%** clerical or administrative duties.
- Provides a **clear job/project** description for the work experience.
- **Orients** the student to the organization, its culture and proposed work assignment(s).
- Helps the student develop and achieve **learning goals**.
- Offers **regular feedback** to the student intern.⁸

An internship may last only a matter of weeks, while others may be as long as a semester or more. Interns may be embedded into a functional team, or they may work separately or with other interns. While some interns will be the only intern on staff, it is not uncommon for larger companies to have dozens or hundreds of interns employed at any given time. There are specific U.S. Department of Labor rules⁹ for who must be compensated for an internship in a for-profit company. Interns who generate any kind of benefit for the business, for example, are required to be compensated. Those earning academic credit or who are the sole person benefiting from the role, however, often are not compensated.¹⁰

Almost all adults and many students presumably know what an internship is, but sometimes have problems discerning this modality from other work-based learning opportunities.



Internships are distinguishable (albeit sometimes subtly) from other ‘ships, but as previously mentioned, have very different purposes. Apprenticeships, for example, are far less common in the U.S. than elsewhere in the world. They are often geared towards skilled areas or hands-on trades that require in-depth study and on-the-job learning over a longer duration than most internships, and for training toward a specific profession. The scope of internships and apprenticeships vary, too; for example, an internship may encompass an entire area like digital marketing for just a month, while an apprenticeship might be a year-long commitment that is limited to a specific area of marketing like coding. Apprenticeships are nearly always paid at a rate designed to sustain at least a modest living, and nearly always lead to a job, while internships are experiential by nature.¹¹ Externships, on the other hand, are almost never paid and are nearly always formally affiliated with classroom learning. They may be as short as a day or a week and are designed to give a brief taste of a specific working environment, while possibly leading to a longer-term internship.¹²

There are, in fact, three broad categories of work-based learning. Broadly speaking, a “work-based learning opportunity” can be any experience that allows a student to learn about work (think: job fair, job shadow, or career day). It can be an experience that allows students an opportunity to learn through work (think: internship or cooperative education/co-op experience). Or it could be an opportunity to learn for work and gain specific skills for a specific job (think: apprenticeships). In the “learning through work” category, internships can be paid or unpaid, for credit or not, and allow kids to explore the working world in general and build broad workplace skills yet aren’t necessarily intended to prepare someone to immediately enter a specific field.

Evolving the conversation from “finding a job” to “finding the right path for me”

Despite the benefits of on-the-job learning, very few high schoolers are undertaking internships. While only 8% of teenagers in the ASA online community we surveyed had completed an internship, about a third of them (32%) had a job during the last school year. For many teenagers, finding a job is a means to a paycheck, with very little thought given to how it connects to their future and interests. In fact, for

most students in our teen community, the biggest reported factors in looking for a job during the school year were pay (87%) and how well it aligns with their school schedule (82%). Just 40% said choosing a job in an area of career interest was a priority.¹³ Our research of a wider cohort of 840 students shows that only 36% of students who are employed cite that they “want to learn new skills”, while 75% cite wanting to make money as the top reason they have a job.

This points to an exciting opportunity to change the narrative around work-based learning experiences if more can be done to address the financial barriers and time constraints of current models. We must find more opportunities for students to learn AND earn.

“I loved my internship experience working at an electrical contracting company and I want a future in electrical installation. Everyone there was very kind and I saw what it took to be an electrician for a company. Overall I believe it boosted my morale towards wanting to pursue a career in electrical.”

12th-grader, New York

What if the excitement around earning money that many students feel when taking on odd jobs like babysitting or bagging groceries could be channeled into work that tightly aligned to their academic interests and future plans? When we change the narrative from finding a job—which most see as just a way to make money—to looking for a career-aligned internship, and when we help students pick an internship that yields valuable, in-demand skills, we allow young people to get in the driver’s seat as they build a plan for their future.

In Skills for Rhode Island’s Future’s PrepareRI program, 89% of the nearly 500 students who completed an internship said **they believe the skills they learned during the**

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experience will help them in the future. Around 76% said they learned something new about themselves during the experience, and a similar number (79%) said it provided an opportunity to learn about their unique and specific skills and interests.

Internships hold clear value as a pathway to a career, although admittedly the immediate career pipeline power is perhaps more tangible for young adult interns who may be closer to entering the world of full-time employment. Around 60% of college students complete an internship or a co-op, and around 56% of those opportunities later convert to a full-time job.¹⁴ Perhaps more important than the power of the internship to lead to actual career opportunity is the **affirming and clarifying power these experiences hold for young people.** Of the high school interns in the PrepareRI program, 52% reported that the internship confirmed their interest in a career they thought they were interested in. Around 14% gained interest in a new career area, and of equal importance, around one in ten interns (11%) learned that they might *not* be interested in a field they thought they liked after all. The power of the internship to confirm the perception vs. reality of working in a field is exceptional and can potentially save young people much time and heartache pursuing the wrong field in their early career and higher education planning endeavors, when the stakes are much higher.

One thing is clear: the appetite among students for connections with prospective employers—whether in the short or the long-term—is growing in this climate of COVID-19-fueled uncertainty. A survey conducted in 2019 asked Gen Z students how strongly they agreed with the statement “It is important to establish connections with employers even if they don’t have an immediate job opening.” Only 59% strongly agreed then,

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but as of August, 2020, 81% strongly agreed, reflecting an increased sense of urgency among students for pathways to employment.¹⁵ The internship, either in-person or virtual, is one such promising pathway.

The rise of the virtual internship

In the early days of COVID-19, more than one-third of all internships were rescinded. Still, some 40% of employers surveyed reported that they were **opting to transition to remote internships**, or were delaying or changing start dates as they worked through logistics.¹⁶ As the pandemic has progressed and complicated traditional routes to and through higher education and the workforce, employers are exploring the virtual internship as a valuable tool for meeting staffing needs, training future talent, and for continuing to give back to the community.

The high school students of 2020 are very familiar with the opportunities and perceived limitations of the remote learning environment. Remote, blended, and “pod” learning settings are their norm, and educators are finding new ways to offer traditionally hands-on subject matter in the digital space. **This rapid transition to digital is extending beyond school, into higher education, and the workforce**—a workforce which the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics says now comprises 35% of employees working full-time from their homes.¹⁷ For the foreseeable future, a working environment that is at least partly remote/blended is a strong possibility. And even for those who will be entering in-person workplaces, a strong digital skillset is almost certain to be a requisite, along with the other skills laid out in the [New Foundational Skills of the Digital Economy](#) report.

To date, just 2% of the students in our teen community who had completed an internship had done so remotely.¹⁸ The PrepareRI internship, however, due to its structure, saw all of the nearly 500 high school students complete a virtual internship. Of that program’s interns, 75% reported that they would be likely to apply to another virtual internship in the future (compared to 94% who reported being likely to apply to an in-person internship in the future.) While in-person is still a more popular format, that three in four interns would be likely to repeat a similar experience should be seen as a win for virtual internships.

Awareness of the virtual internship is growing and should be explored and expanded further, particularly as it relates to



The virtual internship may be particularly valuable as a way to combat some of the barrier to entry in an internship.

experiences where practical and safe to do so, the virtual internship may be particularly valuable for communities hit hardest by COVID-19 and a way to combat some of the barrier to entry in an internship—like workplace safety or transportation to a job site. In [Lowell, MA](#) for example, a city deeply disrupted by the impacts of the pandemic, Project LEARN launched a Commencement 2 Careers program, a two-month program that teaches teens workplace basics like Microsoft Excel and resume-building, and is followed by a stipend-supplemented virtual internship with a local participating business.¹⁹ **Skills for Rhode Island's Future was able to move its paid PrepareRI internship program into a digital environment, thus reaching a larger target audience than the usual 400 students**, and not having to grapple with the logistics of matching students to job sites based on geography—they could be matched purely based on student interest in a specific work field.

But for internships, like other areas of education and work, the subject matter largely determines how successfully a program can be taken online, and which (if any) components must remain in a face-to-face environment. A welding program, for example, may be nearly impossible to replicate digitally, no matter how many YouTube videos exist on the subject, whereas a digital marketing internship is easily transferable, and perhaps even preferable, in the online environment. How (or indeed, if) the more technical fields adapt their internships to the virtual realm remains to be seen, although some early examples of successful virtual

the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The virtual trend will serve not only a practical purpose (to expand an existing form of work experience into the virtual space), but also a greater societal need (to offset the educational and economic disruption caused by the pandemic.) While we still must figure out a way to scale in-person

conversions are emerging, and proving that it can be done in spite of major logistical hurdles. Global Cornell, for example, successfully and quickly rearranged a Costa Rican sea turtle conservation internship to take place in the virtual realm, in addition to agricultural and development internships that were originally slated to take place in Ecuador and Ghana.²⁰ Apprentice Learning was able to get tool kits and building materials for all of its architecture interns shipped to student's homes prior to launch of the program for true hands-on learning.

Virtual internships completed during high school should be viewed as a low- or no-cost investment in an educational experience that can bolster a sparse resume, fortify a student's limited knowledge of the working world, and bring more clarity to assumptions about what it might be like to work in a particular field. The format also serves to virtually connect them to businesses and mentors who may be influential in their future success. And the digital skills-building opportunity a virtual internship can provide in a short space of time is invaluable for those hoping to enter today's workforce. Yet, clearly, some of the key features of every internship experience may still best be realized in an in-person experience, and that may be particularly true for younger, less-experienced high school students. At Skills for Rhode Island's Future, for example, it was clear that the mentoring aspect of the internship—the ability to make strong personal connections and build social capital—were not as strongly realized in the digital environment as in-person.

The students we surveyed in our teen community understood the advantages but were equally skeptical about the practicalities of virtual internships. Their skepticism is understandable, as this format has not been the

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norm and, much like the online college experience many are begrudgingly entering, would not have been their first choice. Among the concerns these students expressed with this format were **a lack of hands-on and face-to-face experience, the potential for distractions in a virtual workplace, technology constraints, and a loosely defined sense that they would be missing “the full experience” of in-person work.** Still, the same percentage (41%) of students said they would prefer an in-person internship as were ambivalent about where the experience took place.²¹ Here is what a few students had to say on the matter:

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“You won’t get the hands-on experience that you would in person, but it is the safest way to work nowadays.”

~~~~~  
11th-grader, FL

.....  
***“...I am rather extroverted and prefer hands-on learning, and wouldn’t like the fact that it wasn’t in a traditional setting. It would also be harder for me to hold myself accountable.”***

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10th-grader, WV

.....
“The advantages of remote internships clearly [outweigh] the disadvantages. Less chance of catching COVID-19. Working from home, however, brings more distractions along.”

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10th-grader, IL

.....  
***“I believe there are advantages such as not having to travel or get ready for as long a time. But there are also disadvantages such as not having that human contact and not having hands-on experience while being at the physical job site. I believe both are good in their own ways, but virtual or remote would not be my first choice.”***

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12th-grader, NY

Students who participated in a PrepareRI virtual internship had the following to say:

.....
“I think a virtual internship allowed for more students to be involved in this program since some of the companies that interns would have been placed in were not open or were unable to have interns in their facilities such as hospitals or nursing homes.”

~~~~~  
High school graduate (former PrepareRI intern)

.....  
***“Having a virtual internship was great because it gave me something productive to do with my time and an opportunity to learn during the pandemic. It was also a helpful experience to learn how to work virtually.”***

~~~~~  
12th-grader (former PrepareRI intern)

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“[The internship was] very important in order to teach us how to work in a virtual environment where many may work someday.”

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12th-grader (former PrepareRI intern)

.....  
***“It was a lot of fun dealing with real world issues, finding a solution that would help solve the problem, and [I] made a lot of open paths for my careers for the near future.”***

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12th-grader (former PrepareRI intern)

While the virtual internship necessitates the absence of some facets of traditional work life, as some of the students in our teen community perceived, **there are many less-obvious benefits that students can consider with the virtual internship format.** In addition to fewer work-



related expenses and the inherently lower health risks of not being exposed to an office environment during a pandemic, students can also circumvent the geographical restrictions that may have once prohibited their movement. Even a teenager living in rural Wyoming can participate

in a Silicon Valley tech internship, for example, where before she may have been required to relocate and find housing for the experience. And from the perspective of the company, having a geographically wider talent pool from which to select interns may prove useful.

With a virtual internship, even a teenager living in rural Wyoming can participate in a Silicon Valley tech internship.

Although some organizations have struggled to replicate the internship experience online, others have chosen to offer **a new kind of experience that wouldn't have been otherwise possible** with the help of tools like Zoom and other cloud-based collaboration software. Florida-based startup GRUBRRR, for example, holds virtual stand-up meetings daily for interns, and also hosts a weekly speaker series in which CEOs from across the country join to share their experiences, leaving time for interns to ask questions.²² Another company, New York City-based MongoDB, incorporates fun activities into interns' days, like a virtual cooking class, supplied with ingredients that are mailed to each student.²³ With virtual internships beginning to grow and flourish, time will tell how companies and interns might rise above the inherent challenges of virtual learning and innovate to create even more robust and exciting programs. And with virtual workplaces becoming increasingly common across the board, the digital skills that can be developed during a virtual internship may be invaluable in bolstering a young person's resume.

Students want to be paid for their work

We talked to high school students about unpaid versus paid internships, and unsurprisingly, very few students (just 25%) would be interested in an unpaid internship that was simply to gain experience, or that was for school credit (34%). However, 94% were either somewhat or very interested in an internship that was paid.²⁴

Among the 271 companies offering internships to high school students (which represents 45% of all internship-offering companies we surveyed), 63% pay their interns themselves, 8% pay them through a third party, and 9% pay them through state or city funding.²⁵ Unpaid internships certainly still exist (20% of employers in our survey do not pay their high school interns), but in light of government guidelines, **many companies have opted to offer paid internships** on the basis that paid internships are not only more appealing, but fairer and more sustainable for the needs of young people today. The desire for pay is not limited to college students and young adult interns. It is fair to say, based on our understanding of high school students' situations in 2020 and what they have told us, that only a very fortunate few teenagers are able or willing to commit to a sustained, extracurricular workload that does not generate any type of income or have a stipend attached. In some cases, **an internship comes with unreimbursed expenses of its own**, like commuter rail fare or gas money, food expenses, and the cost of business attire, meaning the unpaid intern or their parents/guardians might be financially worse off for the opportunity. While relocation for a high school internship is certainly not the norm, it's worth noting that the average summer internship for young adults that did involve relocation to one of five major U.S. cities during the summer of 2016 was estimated to cost around \$6,200 out of pocket.²⁶

Only a very fortunate few teenagers are able or willing to commit to a sustained, extracurricular workload that does not generate any type of income.



Although the benefits of the internship are clear from the perspective of many working adults, it is certainly understandable that many teenagers today are prioritizing opportunities that will give them access to a paycheck and that offer strong work-life balance. It's

then understandable that growing numbers of young people taking on flexible side work within the gig economy²⁷ (think Instacart grocery delivery services, or app-generated and on-demand dog walking services), and that the internship that pays nothing is an opportunity few can afford or want to pursue. Yet, it is critical that we change the conversation around priorities and encourage young people to pursue this avenue. Especially given the challenges facing young people coming of age in the post-COVID-19 economy, now is an opportune time to explore internships as an avenue to help young people build strong connections with

The right internship carried out in high school can form a powerful component of any student's toolkit.

prospective employers. Internships also enable them to develop skills that will both allow for greater workplace opportunity and a better chance to understand their own career interests.

The right internship carried out while in high school—one that offers both in-depth experience and a sustainable work-life arrangement—can form a powerful component of any student's toolkit. It can help them build a career identity, help them build skills for long-term career success, and help them better chart a post-secondary education plan that is in line with this newly developed career vision. Whether for pay or not, students should be encouraged to perform a cost-benefit analysis to determine how an internship may set them up for success in ways that transcend the monetary.



FINDING THE RIGHT INTERNSHIP

Many employers have opted to continue offering virtual internships following initial success in the spring and summer of 2020, and after learning early lessons about the strength of an all-online experience. Among the major corporate players offering virtual internships today are companies like Google, Twitter, SAP, Humana, JPMorgan Chase, Liberty Mutual and Microsoft.

What follows is a non-exhaustive list of **virtual internship opportunities, resources, and databases** that can be used to help guide students and show them what options exist in this space:

State-sponsored internships

Many states have organized internship opportunities for high school students and are eager to help to coordinate the placement of students with local employers. Some of these opportunities are focused on increasing participation in certain high-need fields like STEM (such as the MA Tech Collaborative), while others are more general in nature (like PrepareRI). Students can be encouraged to search for the state-sponsored internship opportunities that are available in their state.

School-coordinated internships

Many high schools are beginning to coordinate and accelerate participation in internships. Students can be encouraged to research the work-based learning programs available in their area (or virtually), together with their counselor or work-based learning coordinator. Students should be urged to use existing resources and infrastructures to conduct a search for the best and most appropriate opportunities for them.

Independently researched internships

In situations where students must work alone to find available internships, they can be encouraged to use tools such as the following in their research:

Chegg Internships is an internship and volunteer opportunity repository that allows high school students to search for opportunities in various major cities, as well as those that are offered remotely. A quick search of vacancies that are both paid and remote, for example, yielded 125 listings, including such titles as “Cruise Travel Intern,” “Legal Intern,” and “Software Engineer Intern.”

Google is now offering many internships online and is continuously accepting applications for positions both virtual and in cities worldwide. While the requisites for employment are notably higher at Google than elsewhere, the company boasts “opportunities for everyone...with a healthy disregard for the impossible”, and their programs are among the most robust in the world. Students interested in tech-centered careers can browse and be inspired by #googleinterns and #googlestudents content on this site.

The Smithsonian has partnered with San Francisco’s The Aquarium of the Bay to offer remote internship opportunities specifically for high school students interested in environmental science, no matter where they are in the U.S. While this is just one avenue, and the internship is unpaid, it is worthwhile to note that this type of STEM-based conservation work at such a prestigious organization is coveted for its resume- and college applications-enhancing value. For students hoping to work in this field, it may be worth carrying out a cost-benefit analysis to



see where the road could lead. Similar remote internship postings exist at the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), the [Jet Propulsion Laboratory](#), and [United Planet](#) - in partnership with Portland State University, which awards credit to virtual interns. An exhaustive and current list of available internship opportunities can be found on Google's job search engine.

[Intern From Home](#) is a cost-free platform created in 2020 by undergraduates at Brown University. It aims to match college students with companies that are offering virtual internships and allows users to search open roles by season or year, as well as by paid/unpaid opportunities. While this option is not currently available to high school students, it is worth exploring for soon-to-be college students who want a finger on the pulse of what virtual internships are out there if or when they enter college.

[ASA Internship Resources](#) - At this link, high school students can find valuable and specific guidance for resume-writing and for kickstarting the process of applying for an internship. Interview tactics and tips, as well as suggestions for finding the best internship, are also shared here.

[ASA Futurescape](#) - For those students uncertain about their desired area of career focus, this immersive and free digital experience offers insights into one's potential futures based on passions, personality and preferences.

[Connect with ASA](#) - Students looking for career guidance or additional extracurricular resources are welcome to connect with ASA on social media, where we regularly share content designed to help inspire students to plan for their best future.



Policy Recommendations

1 Establish guidelines for providing academic credit in high school for internship work experience and change graduation requirements where necessary.

States should look to change high school graduation requirements to allow for internships to count toward high school credit, and ensure that all students know these opportunities exist. Establishing the regulatory infrastructure to expand internships for high school credit is a necessary first step to ensure these valuable hands-on learning opportunities are accessible to more students and valued by educators and industry alike. Once the infrastructure is in place, school districts then need to ensure these opportunities are widely communicated, equitable to all students, and the means of accessing them are not overly burdensome.

2 Create dedicated funding streams or financial incentives for employers to expand paid internship opportunities to younger students.

All students deserve an opportunity to attend school and participate in well-funded work-based learning, so they can explore careers they may want to pursue someday and simultaneously earn much needed wages. States should provide financial incentives and support to involve employers and ensure interns can be paid with the help of grant programs or tax credits for employers.

3 Establish statewide internship coordination systems.

A centralized statewide intermediary can help connect students, employers, schools, community-based organizations, and support services to appropriate internship opportunities and help employers with many of the time-consuming administrative burdens of running an internship program. States should support such networks and provide the funding necessary to ensure that they can thrive.

4 Encourage greater private sector investment.

Public-private partnerships that have been used to increase investment in internships at the collegiate level should be expanded to serve younger students. Similarly, foundations and for-profit companies should be encouraged to fund internships in high-need sectors.

5 Remove barriers to virtual experiences.

Virtual internships can pose a challenge for employers and students alike, but they can also open a new world of opportunity. As policymakers work toward implementing virtual



Policy Recommendations (cont.)

internships in their own regions, they should first **remove any restrictions or laws that require work-based learning of state or federally funded programs to be in-person.** **Next, all students must have access to technology and government entities must support expansion of internet access to ensure equitable access to these virtual experiences.** Finally, states can also sponsor creative solutions that provide high-quality work experiences for students. Now is the time to rethink how we link classroom experience to the working world to ensure kids can both stay engaged with their learning and gain valuable workplace skills for future success. States should do all they can to embrace workplace learning—both digitally and in-person.

More details on all these proposals can be found [here](#).



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