

Preparing Youth for Life:

THE GOLD STANDARDS FOR HIGH SCHOOL INTERNSHIPS

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I. Introduction & Overview

Introduction from JD Hoye President, National Academy Foundation

The National Academy Foundation (NAF) has worked for a quarter century to raise the standard of academic and financial achievement among young people—especially among underperforming students. Each year, we serve over 50,000 students in approximately 500 NAF Career Academies in 41 states and the District of Columbia. We have long advocated for the value of work-based learning opportunities that are essential to helping youth succeed as adults in the world of work and beyond.

High school internships are just one component of a continuum of work-based learning experiences; if properly designed and implemented, they can be the pinnacle of years of carefully planned learning opportunities that bring together key workplace lessons. NAF believes that agreed-upon standards for high school internships will clarify expectations that youth, school personnel and partners, and employers should have when creating, implementing and evaluating internship experiences.

This document lays out a vision for high school internships to drive discussions about how to achieve this vision. NAF is grateful to the Career Academy and Internship Task Force members who shared their expertise and framed this information, employers who participated in focus group sessions and for the generous support of the James Irvine Foundation. We look forward to continued discussion and the implementation of strategies that result in stronger individuals and a stronger workforce.

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Overview: Preparing Youth for Life – The Gold Standards for High School Internships

Now more than ever, stakeholders as disparate as youth, schools, employers, and communities understand the importance of a labor force ready to successfully navigate the global economy. At an individual level, workers have specific skill requirements in order to obtain stable employment that gives them a sense of achievement and purpose in their lives. Employers must have skilled, innovative, and reliable workers to keep America competitive in world markets, to serve local communities, and to ensure our common future. Schools understand the need to prepare youth for success in college *and* careers.

Employers from companies of all sizes contribute substantial time and resources to support career academies by serving as curriculum advisors, providing compensated internships and work-based learning opportunities for students, advising and mentoring youth, exposing them to career fields, and encouraging them to pursue postsecondary education. These contributions from employers and school partners provide needed resources to career academies and schools and improve the quality of education for youth. High school internships, particularly those that are compensated, are an essential component of workforce preparation. Internships introduce youth to the habits and value of compensated work, while making connections between academic learning and its real-world application.

While we knew much about the best practices of work-based learning, especially high school internships, there were no clear and measurable standards to ensure that young people receive the experiences that will most benefit America’s workforce. Furthermore, we recognized that many youth do not have access to the supports necessary to prepare them for successful careers, especially where parents and family members are not skilled in navigating corporate America.

The time has come to make use of the 25 years of rich research and practice about work-based learning strategies to create a set of standards and provide guidance for their implementation. In particular, we need standards that will ensure that internships help all young people learn the career skills that they need to succeed in the 21st Century.

NAF has convened the nation’s experts in work-based learning on a task force to develop a set of standards for high school internships that will detail the outcomes that youth, schools and employers should expect from these learning experiences. This group also addressed policy recommendations.

The standards in this document are based on established effective policies and best practices concerning high school internships. The task force believes that with policies and practices clearly defined, the standards can detail what youth, school personnel, and employers should experience as a result of high quality internships. The standards offer components that, when

implemented with fidelity, will produce expected outcomes from high quality internship experiences.

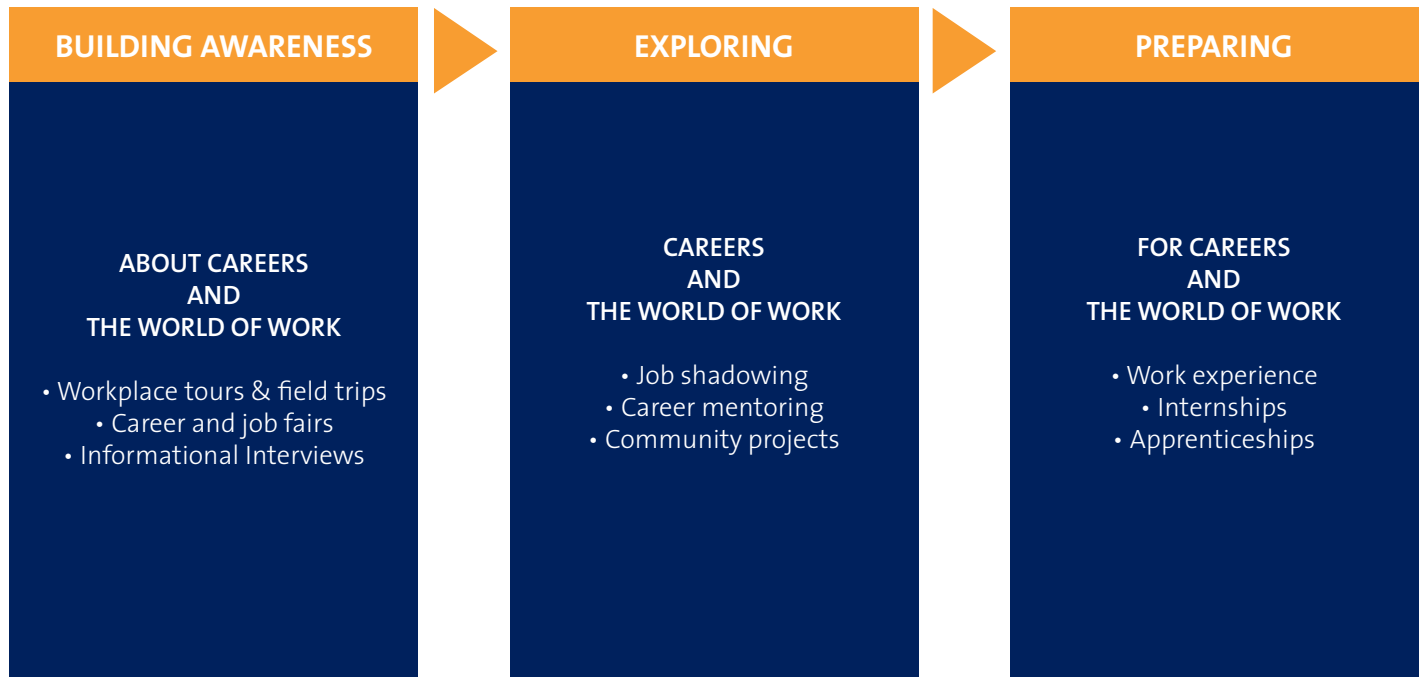
This document serves to identify a set of “gold standards” for high school internships, and to offer strategies for achieving this vision. This tool is intended to be used to determine strategies for the creation and implementation of the standards in order to serve youth, schools and employers, as well as offering a platform for dialogue and exchange about what really works in classrooms and places of business.

NAF is interested in further leveraging the work of partners and working together to create and sustain a platform that will help us to implement the Internship Gold Standards and to:

1. Develop tools such as program guides for students, teachers, internship providers, and others that will offer detailed instruction on how to establish meaningful internship opportunities for high school students. The tools will leverage programs that have been developed by industry partners and the expertise of the NAF network
2. Partner with industry leaders to create tools to measure the effectiveness of student internship experiences
3. Connect businesses and local high schools to develop internship opportunities and strengthen local communities

A Continuum of Work-Based Learning

The gold standards for high school internships are a part of a continuum of work-based learning that includes career awareness, exploration and preparation activities, as represented below:¹



PREPARE, DO, REFLECT

Youth, educators, parents, employers, intermediaries and others involved in the career development continuum prepare for, do, and then reflect on activities to maximize value for all involved.

¹New Ways to Work. Preparing All Youth for Success in College, Career, and Life. 2009. www.newwaystowork.org

II. The Gold Standards for High School Internships

Summary:

Service providers across America offer a variety of programs and approaches to high school internships. These experiences reflect local employer offerings and needs and youth interests.

There are key practices that exist to ensure a high quality internship, while preserving the flexibility that allows the internship to respond to the company's and student's needs. Following are the standards to which all stakeholders in the high school internship experience should aspire to reach.

In Practice:

STANDARD 1

INTERNSHIPS ARE PART OF A CONTINUUM OF WORK-BASED LEARNING

Internships exist within a developmental learning framework as the culmination of this continuum.

High quality high school internships are informed by previous student activities that include:

- Opportunities to acquire career skills and investigate fields of interest related to the intern's career and college goals
- Career preparation that links the internship experience to the skills and attributes needed to enter and succeed in the world of work and college

STANDARD 2

INTERNSHIPS ARE COMPENSATED

Youth are compensated for internship experiences that occur through school-based and community/worksites enterprises. Compensation may include a salary, payment for college credit or other appropriate solutions.

- Youth receive compensation for their work in a manner that rewards them for their efforts, thereby mirroring the real-world work place; this compensation also holds employers accountable for developing meaningful, structured learning experiences
- Internship providers comply with all components of the Fair Labor Standards Act

STANDARD 3

INTERNSHIPS DRIVE EDUCATION EQUITY

High schools aim to achieve excellence (high student achievement) and equity (opportunity and success for each and every student). Youth today need internships as a part of a high quality education that equips them with the knowledge and skills to achieve their full intellectual and social potential.

Ensuring that the internship experience is available for all students, and that appropriate supports are built into the experience, allows all students to be successful in this endeavor.

STANDARD 4

INTERNSHIPS ARE BASED ON IDENTIFIED YOUTH INTERESTS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Internships and their objectives are stated in youth-centered, written, individual learning plans, differentiated for youth skill levels, and are based on work-based learning research and employer-defined work readiness skills needed for success. The continuum of experiences and learning for youth include interest surveys, mentoring and career exploration experiences to allow the internship to be aligned to a young person's interests.

STANDARD 5

INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES ALIGN WITH ACADEMIC LEARNING

Internships complement and support core competencies and academic requirements and are included as part of course curriculum.

- Internship and academic learning objectives align
- Curriculum is developed to incorporate learning from internships and 21st Century skills
- Internships provide an avenue to college and career opportunities for youth who would otherwise not consider these options

STANDARD 6

INTERNSHIPS PRODUCE VALUABLE WORK THAT FURTHERS EMPLOYERS' ORGANIZATIONAL GOALS

Interns support the goals and efforts of the host organization.

Internships help employers to develop their future workforce while creating long-term, sustainable partnerships that link the education of youth with the bottom line for businesses.

STANDARD 7**ALL PARTICIPANTS ARE PREPARED FOR, AND REFLECT UPON, INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCES**

The internship includes comprehensive preparation beforehand for youth, schools and employers to understand its goals, as well as a debrief after the internship has ended to reflect on the experience. Those involved in the learning experience understand the responsibilities and expected outcomes of the internship which are detailed in youth's written, individual learning plans.

- School personnel, partners and intermediaries are responsible for preparing youth and employers for internship experiences, through the use of written, individual learning plans
- School personnel and partners have the support needed to help establish structured learning objectives and facilitate interaction between employers and learners
- Youth are committed to implementing the individual learning plan and are supported by school personnel, partners and employers in meeting its established objectives; youth understand what to expect from an internship, and what they must contribute to maximize career skill development
- Employers receive orientation and training about how to engage youth in internships to maximize their own participation and youth's learning experiences

STANDARD 8**SYSTEMS ARE IN PLACE TO SUPPORT INTERNSHIP PARTICIPANTS THROUGHOUT THE EXPERIENCE**

Internships are supported by an operational structure with supports that allow participants to work together effectively.

This includes:

- Employers' points of contact with the NAF Academy, school personnel or other intermediary
- A vehicle to broker the school and employer cultures (i.e., a person, a system)
- A quality control and supervision system to support learning in an effective and safe environment
- A role for interested parties to be involved in and trained in helping procure internships
- A well-defined employer guidebook and orientation/preparation process
- A system that reasonably protects employers' liability for employing and working with youth
- An evaluation process of and by employers, youth, educators and parents
- A defined timeframe for internships—Internships generally are implemented for a period of 8-10 weeks for 35-40 hours a week
- A third party (intermediary) or a school district to provide continuity of pre-internship training, implementation and post-internship follow-up activities, as well as recruit new internship-providing employers

STANDARD 9**INTERNSHIPS ARE ASSESSED AGAINST IDENTIFIED YOUTH INTERESTS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Internships are assessed against youth-centered, written, individual learning plans. Performance is evaluated by the employer/supervisor and the teacher/coordinator before, during and after the internship experience. Assessment data is used to measure changes in motivation, attendance, engagement and achievement in the classroom.

NAF is developing a tool to assess the value of each student's work-based learning experience, paired with a certification and assessment system that evaluates student end-of-course knowledge, and student portfolios of work while in the Academy. Taken together, these three evaluation instruments will provide a comprehensive assessment of student knowledge and 21st century skills, and serve as a valuable credential for graduation, college, and careers.

STANDARD 10**INTERNSHIPS OCCUR IN SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS**

Internship experiences are compliant with legal, health, and safety regulations. Participants understand how to work with a diverse workforce.

Benefits:

Benefits for Youth: *Youth learn about essential aspects of the world of work, the correlation between school skills and work skills, and the components of success in the workplace.*

High quality internships result in the following for youth:

- Youth are motivated to be successful in school
- Youth increase their career preparedness and knowledge of the habits (skills and competencies) of compensated work. Ultimately, youth understand their own interests and abilities as they relate to the world of work
- Youth increase their skills to respond to the demands of the 21st century workforce and economy. This includes navigating learning, life, and information technology; understanding content knowledge and current topics; organizing and allocating resources; and working effectively with others
- Youth build an understanding of themselves as lifelong learners and apply this to their future schooling and careers
- Youth understand the relationship between work, personal income and lifelong earning: compensated internships reinforce the relevance of work in life.
- Youth strengthen and improve their academic success, with behaviors such as enhanced motivation, attendance, and engagement in learning

- Youth understand the importance of, and strive to build and maintain, relationships with people different from themselves
- Youth increase their sense of civic engagement and responsibility. They understand how work addresses a community or public purpose in addition to the commercial and profit-seeking aspects
- Youth build self-confidence and maturity by working with adults in a business environment
- Youth improve their oral and written communications skills.
- Youth include their families in the learning experience. Youth help build pride among family members for their involvement in learning and new opportunities, leading to higher expectations for lifelong achievement. Youth and families receive support to make internships a collective learning experience

Benefits for School Personnel and Partners: *School personnel learn to work collaboratively with internship providers and receive training to help youth maximize their internship opportunities.*

School personnel and their community partners are the link between the academic experience and the employer-hosted experience in a high school internship. Their knowledge and leadership helps youth prepare for, participate in and reflect on the internship experience. It is essential that school personnel and school partners can effectively prepare youth and employers for the internship experience. High quality internships result in the following for school personnel:

- School personnel have access to effective professional development experiences to ensure that internships are included in the course curriculum in a way that complements and supports core competencies and academic requirements
 - Teachers learn how to facilitate and engage in dialogues with youth about high school internship experiences throughout the internship
- School personnel receive time and resources necessary to contribute to the internship planning, implementation and evaluation, to ensure that internships are aligned with core competencies and academic requirements
- Teachers, in particular, have time to build their understanding about how to maximize high school internship experiences for youth
- School personnel are informed about the progress of youth in their internship and are able to use this information to tailor individual instruction to support the objectives of youth's written training plans
- Partnerships between schools and workplaces are fostered, and school personnel work collaboratively with employers
 - High school internships provide opportunities for teachers to put classroom learning into a real-world context—ultimately benefiting youth as well
 - School personnel understand how their academic discipline is applied in different work settings

Benefits for Employers: *Employers see a return on their investment that includes increased visibility in their local, national and international markets; improved employee productivity; and greater ability to create and retain a talented workforce.*

Employers are key partners in high school internships. They open the world of work to youth to teach them the content, skills and attitudes needed to succeed in a work environment. To maximize their participation and the benefits received by youth, employers need support before, during and after internships are implemented. High quality high school internships result in the following for employers:

- Employers receive productive work that furthers the mission and goals of their organizations
 - Employers are involved in defining the skills that are needed to succeed in a high school internship experience
- Employers benefit from positive public relations and workforce impact generated by their connection with and support of youth in communities. As a result, they are able to better attract and retain employees
- Employers' staff members are energized by new ideas and connections with youth that anchor their organizations to their communities, resulting in higher morale and productivity among existing workers
- Employers receive a return on investment through the following:
 - Lower recruiting costs
 - Lower new employee training costs
 - Increased retention (lower employee turnover)
 - Increased opportunities for networking and developing new customers, clients and markets
- Employers increase their ability to implement their social responsibility pledges, community investment goals or strategic philanthropic endeavors—particularly in the area of direct community involvement of employees

III. Strategic Next Steps for Achieving the Gold Standards for High School Internships

Policies That Sustain High Quality Internships

Research and practice, such as the MDRC study, have made best practices for high school internships clear. To maintain that success for years to come, policies must be in place to support this.

Effective policies at the federal, state, local and school district levels remove barriers for youth, employers and schools seeking to participate in high school internships. Implementing these policies, where possible, at the federal level would ensure consistency across the country. Following are the policies that we believe are necessary to implement and sustain high quality high school internships:

- Policies that enable schools to promote and support youth moving in and out of the school day to participate in internships, such as allowing for flexibility in scheduling and in promoting the sequencing of courses to maximize internship experiences
- Funding flexibility at the school, local, state and national levels so that resources can be blended to provide sustained commitment for youth to take advantage of compensated internship experiences, as needs and skills allow, to promote equity in learning opportunities
- Alignment of employers' human resource policies to promote and support participation by employees and youth in internship programs
- Incentives for employers to participate in high school internship programs
- A metric for employers to determine the internship capacity for each organization to meet its mission and goals, as well as a compensation guide that motivates employers to participate in high school internships
- Publicly-funded third parties (intermediaries) or school district personnel to recruit new internship-providing employers, and provide continuity of pre-internship training, implementation and post-internship follow-up activities
- Policies that guide school districts to retain and recover youth in school and in work-based learning programs that include internships

The following policy recommendations have been established for the rollout of the Internship Gold Standards:

Federal Policies:

- Create federal tax incentives for all companies offering or funding compensated internship opportunities to students and teachers in Title 1 schools
- Provide funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for internships to intermediaries in 50 of the largest metropolitan areas in the country
- Develop a nationwide consortium to annually review the Internship Gold Standards and implement updated standards
- Fund positions at Title 1 high schools to broker relationships with local businesses and non-profit organizations to extend the classroom to the business community through industry expert

presentations in the classroom, job shadowing opportunities, mentoring, and compensated internship opportunities

- Expand the national education Data Quality Campaign² to define data to be collected for opportunities to extend the classroom into the business community
- Establish systems to tie internship data to high school graduation rates and the preparedness of students for post-secondary education and careers

State Policies:

- Create state tax incentives for all companies offering or funding compensated internship opportunities to underserved individuals
- Create state tax incentives for all companies offering or funding compensated teacher internship opportunities in Title 1 schools
- Develop state-wide consortiums to implement the Internship Gold Standards across all school districts in the state
- Write the Internship Gold Standards into legislation

Local Policies:

- Establish compensated internships for teachers at least once every four years
- Include teacher internships in personal learning plans
- Require teachers to incorporate their internship experiences into class lesson plans
- Engage employers in defining the metrics for internships as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for year-round programs

School District Policies:

- Establish and engage internship committees of all Small Learning Community Advisory Boards (including NAF Advisory Boards), drawing on the expertise of local businesses, higher education, and non-profit organizations
- Utilize the Internship Gold Standards to drive the creation of internship job descriptions and measurement criteria
- Provide training tools for teachers and business partners to help fully implement Internship Gold Standards into the classroom
- Develop a best practice of including the Gold Standards in all high school reform grants and RFP's, for both public and private funders
- Seek funds to pilot and document what it would cost to fully implement the gold standards in NAF Academies. Include the cost of human and financial resources as well as actual school and business policy changes
- Work with schools to make internships credit-bearing and reflected on high school transcripts, as has been done through the California Regional Occupational Programs. Work with post-secondary institutions and employers to have the credit recognized during the admission and/or hiring process

²The Data Quality Campaign began helping states build longitudinal data systems in 2005.

Employer Metrics

Data Collection:

It is recommended that a metric be devised that can offer businesses guidance on the optimum number of internships they should strive to provide. This section of the report identifies several strategies that NAF will undertake to accomplish this goal.

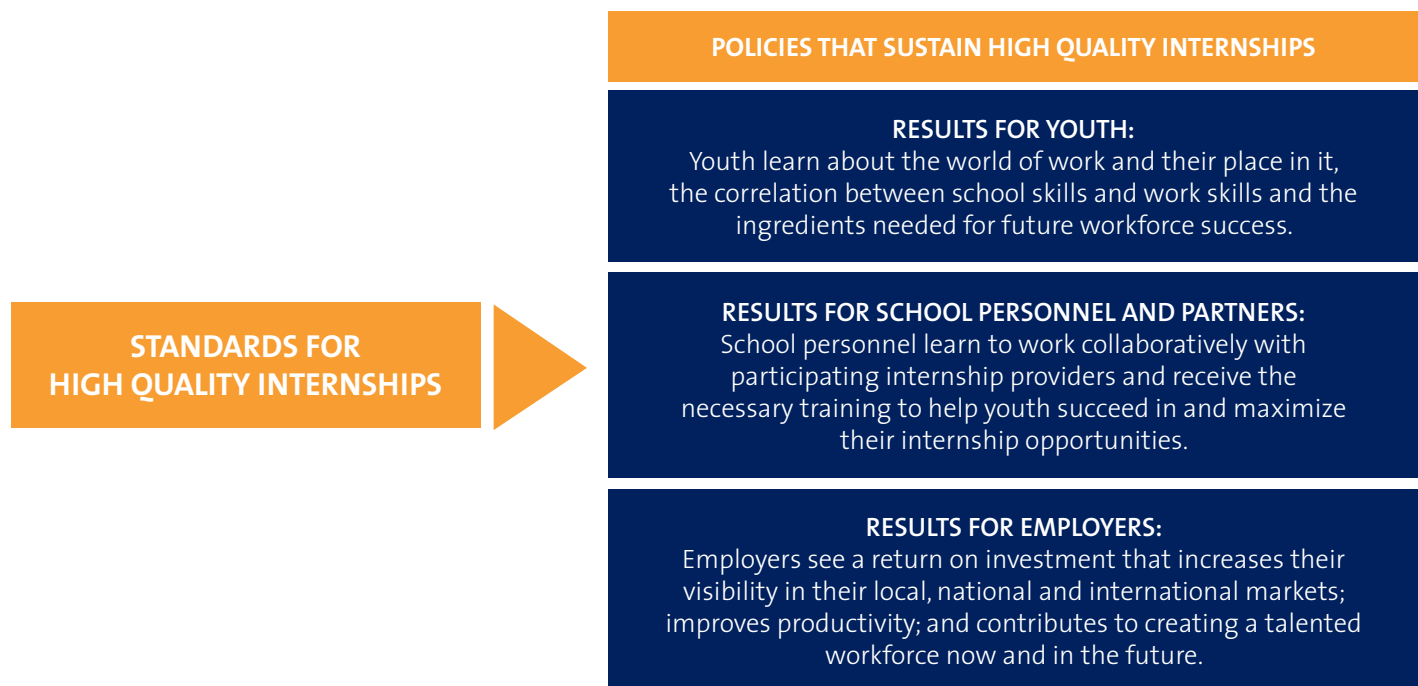
- Identify local, regional, and state organizations that develop internship opportunities for youth and determine if those models can be developed into a national program (for example, the 2% Club in Denver, Boston Private Industry Council, and the Minnesota Keystone Program)
- Identify and meet with companies who have the propensity for philanthropic activities in education to develop projects related to implementing internships. Identify correlations between the number of internships offered by these companies and key financial metrics (i.e. percentage of net income, total charitable contributions expense, community investment budgets)
- Identify all companies within a 10-mile radius of a school, Academy, or site using services such as Dunn and Bradstreet, Hoovers, or the local Chamber of Commerce and facilitate conversations among these businesses to determine the internship formula for employers

Developing Metrics:

- Work with a sampling of these companies to gather metrics to be included in the formula such as:
 - Gift giving levels (e.g. percentage of net income or gross sales)
 - Number of internships provided (compensated and uncompensated)
 - Number of employees at home office and branch locations
 - Workforce retention (e.g. employee turnover percentage)
 - Annual earnings (gross revenue)
 - Annual pre-tax profit
 - Average starting salary
 - Average ending salary
 - Industry of the company
- Using the findings from the above metrics to develop recommended and “stretch” internship goals for companies
- Share these findings with the field and business community

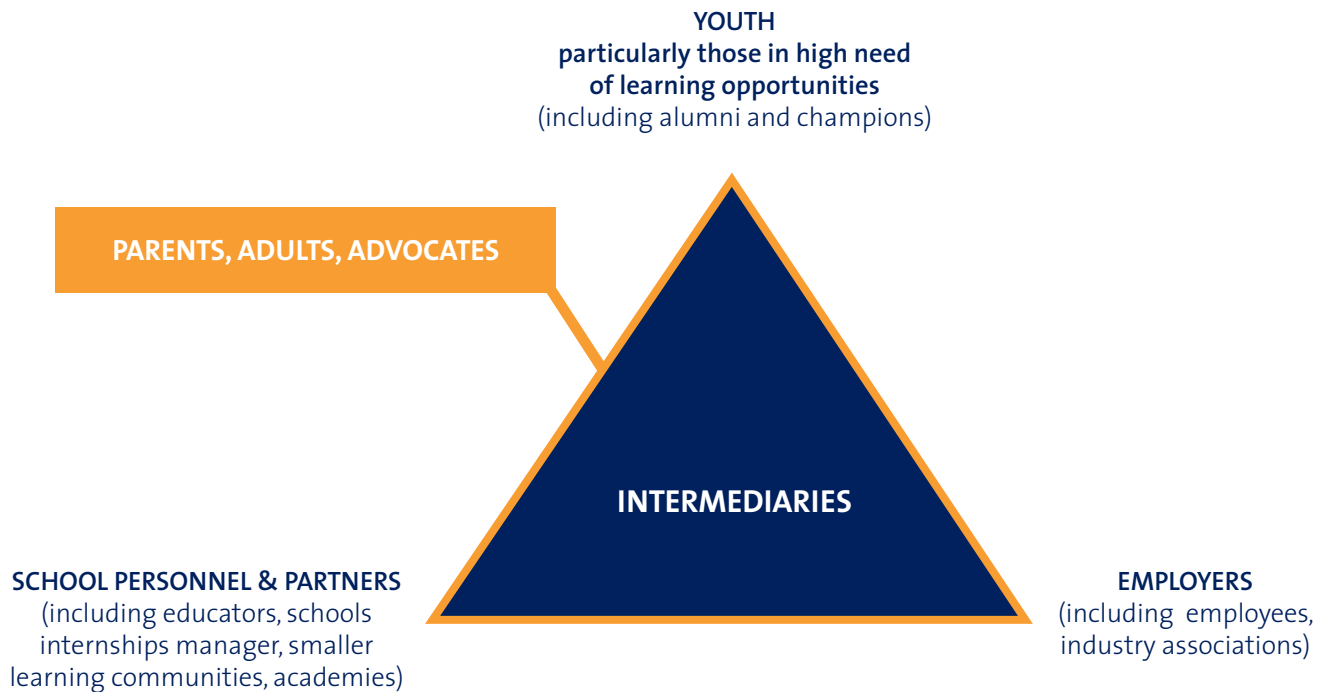
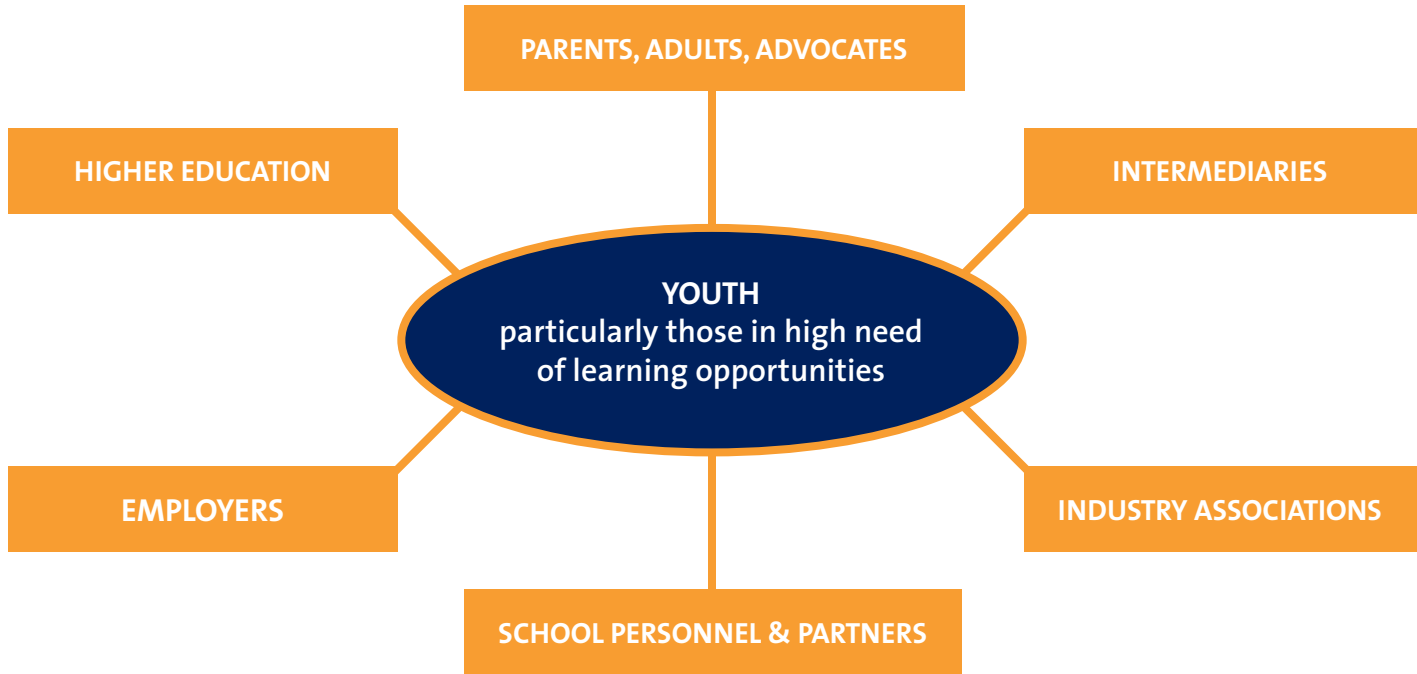
Appendix A: The Gold Standards for High School Internships Support Results for Internship Participants

The goal of high school internships: To support youth and employers in work-based learning experiences that can help level the playing field for all youth and lead to equity in learning, gains in life long earning potential, future workforce development and economic benefits.



Appendix B: Stakeholders Achieve the Gold Standards for High School Internships by Working Together

Successful high school internships occur when key partners are working together to maximize outcomes for all involved. This diagram shows the core partners needed to implement successful internship experiences.





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