

Overview

Real World Learning (RWL) is a regional initiative that seeks to make a difference in the lives of students all across the Kansas City Metropolitan area. The premise is a simple one, high school students who engage in deep, meaningful and relevant job related experiences are more likely to end up with a high quality job which fits each student's interest and aptitude. Those experiences are collectively called Market Value Assets (MVAs)¹. The goal of the Real World Learning initiative is:

By 2030, all high school students across our region graduate with Market Value Assets and a diploma, preparing them for future work and learning

Meeting that goal means all students in the Kansas City Region regardless of their zip code have a greater opportunity for a high quality job and a better life. Doing so means local businesses can acquire homegrown high quality employees.

MVAs are key high school student outcomes that signal career and college readiness and include: **Work Experiences (Internships or Client-Connected Projects), College Credit, Industry Recognized Credential (IRC), Entrepreneurial Experiences and Emerging MVAs** ([see MVA definitions](#))

Guiding principles for identifying whether an output or experience rises to the level of a MVA include:

- Work output has recognized value within industry or post secondary
- Student performance is evaluated by multiple stakeholders, some external to education
- The student grows capabilities in multiple 'KC Portrait of a Graduate' dimensions
- The process of obtaining the asset adds to the student's social capital

With seventeen Cohort 1 school districts in their first RWL grant year and fourteen more scheduled for Cohorts 2 and 3, Kansas City area educators are quickly moving the MVA concept from theory to action. As educators strategically plan for student acquisition of MVAs on a large scale, questions arise about how to create system-wide MVA opportunities for all students while remaining compliant with state policies/requirements like seat time, teacher certification and course coding. And, because many school districts are choosing to extend the Real World Learning concept into lower grades, the compliance conundrum spans grades K-12.

What follows is a description of each perceived barrier along with strategies and information school district administrators can use to eliminate them and pave the way for greater deployment of MVAs.

PERCEIVED BARRIERS

It is first important to recognize that policies and procedures related to the categories listed below come **as a result of state, federal and sometimes local regulations and statutes**. Our goal in providing this information is to highlight avenues school districts can utilize to better know, understand and ultimately be in compliance with requirements — not to find ways around them. With that being said, the first recommendation for questions relating to compliance is to contact your **state education agency (SEA)**. We have found SEA's to generally be most helpful. The Real World Learning initiative is quickly becoming recognizable at the state, and even national level, and SEA's often recognize it as an important educational innovation.

This RWL awareness helps SEA representatives better understand the questions you may have. Sometimes, the difficulty lies in knowing where to call, who to ask and what to ask. The best course of action is to **learn from other RWL schools** who have already navigated such waters and can provide guidance on your path forward and may even give you some new ideas. The Kauffman RWL team is also a resource to help identify these contacts.

Seat Time | Sometimes referred to as the Carnegie Unit, seat time is a method of measuring educational attainment and has been a compliance staple of public educational institutions for over a century. Both Kansas and Missouri have attendance hour reporting requirements which can get complicated, however maintaining seat time requirements is a relatively easy hurdle to overcome. In order for every student to graduate high school with a diploma and at least one MVA, schools are increasingly recognizing the **importance of integrating MVAs into most course offerings**. In doing so, mainstream high school classes begin providing deep learning opportunities for students through MVAs around already approved course content (learning standards). Then, seat time requirement becomes a non issue. It is important to note that seat time requirements can vary depending on course modality - in person, virtual or blended, so be sure to talk with your SEA.

Teacher Certification | In both states, teacher certification requirements are in existence to ensure high quality instructors who have expertise in the field they are teaching. Providing MVA opportunities in mainstream high school courses is one way to ensure teacher certification compliance. We know many **RWL districts are also offering MVA attainment opportunities that fall outside the traditional classes**. For example, so called “one off” MVA classes might be centered around internship or client based project experiences. We have seen schools title these courses around the topic of career exploration or the like. This category often allows for a variety of teacher certification allowances, but be sure to first obtain approval from your SEA. Keep in mind, students, parents and counselors prefer MVA opportunities to be integrated into courses that offer a specific credit toward graduation such as math, communication arts and science.

One of the best examples of MVA attainment being integrated into content course offering is through the science and engineering program, Project Lead the Way (PLTW). PLTW course offerings culminate in a final project and can easily be modified to meet the requirements of a MVA. Some RWL schools are also providing internship opportunities to their students throughout many PLTW courses. ([See PLTW FAQ](#))

Course Coding | Like teacher certification, course coding is a means for SEA's to categorize the kinds of classes schools are offering. Course codes are closely tied to teacher certification and course content to ensure instructional quality for any given subject. In most cases, when MVAs are integrated into a school's already existing course offerings, coding for that course remains the same as does teacher certification and content. For new courses which provide MVA attainment opportunities, the process can be summed up by a comment recently made by a local central office administrator, "obtaining approval for a course offering is like a doctor's office getting approval for the insurance provider, it's all about the coding". In other words, the course code descriptor must match the content that is actually being taught. There are two ways to make this match; either start with the course description and teacher certification then find a closely aligned course code or start with an ideal course code and develop a course offering to match. **Note: course codes come with a course title and descriptor. Your new course must align with the description, not the title. Schools may choose their own course title which might better attract students.** When done with integrity and fidelity, either method can result in a high quality MVA experience for students. Always be sure to obtain approval with your SEA before the course is offered. Be sure to keep good records of the approval process.

Course Content/Competency Based | Because course content and competency based instruction are tied closely to learning standards, for our purposes, we are considering them together. At first, the process of developing unique MVA acquisition opportunities that fulfill any given course's content requirement seems daunting. Whether it be MVA integration into already existing courses or the development of new courses to support the RWL initiative, the process of content alignment is the same. The process involves a careful review of the approved course code/description as well as state and district curriculum content. This content can then be broken down into pieces known as competencies or content standards. Next, administrators, teachers and even students can participate in recognizing each competency a student can acquire by participating in a MVA. By its very definition, MVAs are deep learning experiences. As such, we often find once the process is initiated, participants are amazed at how many competencies students have an opportunity to acquire through the MVA process. Of course, the final step of this alignment process is approval from your SEA. As previously stated, we have found SEA personnel to be most helpful navigating the process so reach out to them early and often.

Summary

We hope that you have found value in this "how to" guide for developing MVA's throughout your school system. Our goal in creating this document was to give you a glimpse into the process of tying MVAs to course requirements and to help RWL school staff to recognize that perceived barriers to this process are not as insurmountable as once thought. If you have other helpful hints that RWL schools could benefit from, please send them our way. We would love to share other best practices.

APPENDIX

Market Value Assets Definitions |

Work Experiences |

Students complete meaningful workplace job tasks that develop readiness for work, knowledge and skills that support entry or advancement in a particular career field.

Internships | Learners perform meaningful job tasks at worksite or approved location, under the guidance of a qualified supervisor.

- Should qualify for high school and/or college credit and/or be paid.
- Minimum 120 hours within a calendar year, at least 60 onsite.
- Performance evaluated by work manager in addition to educator.
- Internship completion substantive enough to be included on students' LinkedIn and/or resume.

Client Projects | Learners analyze and solve authentic problems, working in collaboration with other learners and professionals from industry, not-for-profit, civic or community-based organizations.

- Work involves authentic methods and tools used by professionals in work environment.
- Experience includes mentoring and evaluation by working professionals.
- Output is viewed as value-add by external stakeholders and resume-worthy.

College Credit | Nine (9) or more hours of college-level credit, progressing toward an industry-recognized degree or credential.

Regionally Vetted IRCs (Industry-Recognized Credentials)

Current lists published by state education departments will be reviewed with employers and validated for applicability and relevance – we anticipate a small subset will be included. There may be a small number of regional 'custom' credentials identified that also become part of this category.

ENTREPRENEURIAL EXPERIENCES

Students identify a compelling social or market problem and mobilize resources to research and solve it. Leveraging input and support from multiple stakeholders, students iteratively analyze, prototype, implement, reflect and adapt potential solutions. Outputs of MVA-level entrepreneurial experiences include a market and stakeholder research summary, a 'business plan' that includes an assessment of costs and benefits associated with development or operation of their solution, and feedback from relevant external stakeholders obtained through exhibition or 'shark-tank' type pitch opportunities.