The Moehnesee-Schule is a secondary school with about 450 students in a rural area of Germany. The school organises a series of work experience placements ("Praxisphasen") for all its students. Many of them are conducted in partnership with the Unternehmerforum Moehnesee, a network of local companies that provides different types of internships to students from this school, and from other schools in the area.

Moehnesee-students complete several work experience placements from commencement (in grade 5) to graduation (in grade 10).

Some internships are compulsory, others are voluntary. Each one has its place, time, and purpose.

Familiarisation with the world of work
Early work experience placements in grades 5, 6 or 7 are for young students between the ages of 10 and 13 to gain first insights into the world of work. They follow a working relative or young apprentice during a full workday (or a half) (Job Shadowing).

Focusing on potential areas of future work
In grade 8, students explore career fields. After completing a ‘Potential Analysis’ (another standard tool of career orientation), students pre-select three of 16 existing career fields. They spend one day per field at a relevant company. The objective of the “career field exploration” is to narrow down priority areas for further investigation of interesting occupations after students have considered all available options.

‘Tasting’ occupations and companies
Internships in grades 9 and 10 last for two to three weeks. At this stage, interns are increasingly integrated into every-day work processes and are supervised by the company. Students gain work experience, ‘reality-check’ career options, develop practical skills, and establish contacts with professionals and potential employers.

Entrance position
Internships are stepping stones for apprenticeships and employment. Employers like to hire from within; successful internships are likely to lead into permanent positions. Employers give significant credit to internship certificates.

Internships support all three functions of employment services: orientation, preparation, and matching. As a series and in combination with other career orientation tools (as is the case here), they fulfil all three functions fully.
Grades 5, 6 and 7

Job shadowing days are offered in the first three years of lower secondary education, and before career orientation becomes compulsory for all state secondary school students (in grade 8). Students accompany a working relative or an apprentice to the workplace for the length of a school day (half a workday). Students observe typical work routines, assist in some tasks, and ask many questions.

Job shadowing is voluntary, yet so popular among students, that almost everyone takes part and gets to see a different work place each year.

At this stage and age, students need the support of their parents who use their personal and professional networks to find their son or daughter a person to shadow and register him or her for the day.

Back in school, students share their job shadowing experiences and observations during a reflection round facilitated by the class teacher.

Grade 8

‘Career Field Exploration’ ("Berufsfelderkundung") is mandatory for eighth graders: Students explore three different career fields in order to find out which ones best suit their interests and strengths, and to set (informed) priorities for the longer internships in grades 9 and 10.

Students (not teachers nor parents) choose three out of the 16 existing career fields for further exploration. This happens after students complete the Potential Analysis in grade 8, (which is another compulsory career orientation element assisting students to uncover their individual strengths and preferences). Students talk with the career orientation teacher about their choices.

At this stage, students search for related companies and apply for internship places with increasing self-reliance.

Career field explorations, in most cases, take place in companies. Yet, they can also be provided by trade guild associations, chambers of trades and crafts or by supra-company training providers.
Grades 9 and 10

**Internships** in upper grades are now very targeted. Students are aware of their individual strengths and preferences, and are sufficiently aware of workplace requirements and the work and learning opportunities provided by the local business community. Interns are integrated for two to three weeks into every-day work processes and receive supervision. They participate full-time to learn about the tasks and routines of the work-place and the business. Students reality-check their preferred career options by being exposed to the regular work environment, develop skills and contacts with a potential future employer. Companies observe interns’ performance, support learning and issue internship certificates.

**Possible additional internships**

Some students choose to prolong compulsory internships for a week or two or opt for doing additional internships on a voluntary basis, usually during school breaks. The Moehnesee-Schule supports this. Employers also appreciate voluntary internships as they indicate intrinsic motivation and initiative on the part of the students.

Long term internships can be offered to students in the last year of compulsory schooling. They are possible for students who are at risk of dropping out or who are likely to fail the final exams. They have a part-time structure: Students attend school for three days (focusing on core subjects only) and spend the other two days of the week at the company. More than two thirds of students in this type of internship acquire regular graduation certificates and apprenticeship contracts.

**Additional forms for exploring the world of work**

All of the above-mentioned work experience placements are provided in addition to other experiences for students to encounter the realities of the world of work. Guided factory tours for school classes, visits by working alumni, or attending job fairs, for example, give students even more exploration opportunities.

The school provides some resources; others are provided by external partners:

**Internal Resources**

- **Career Orientation Teachers**
  - The school was one of the first to have specialized career orientation teachers and a career centre (established in 2003). Two career orientation teachers with reduced regular teaching duties coordinate all related services to students and activities with internal and external partners.

- **Internal and External Collaboration**
  - The approach requires internal cooperation of the whole school staff (principal, career orientation teachers, social worker, class and subject teachers)
  - It also requires external cooperation with
    - Parents
    - Companies and private sector institutions (chambers, local company network)
    - Employment Office
    - Regional Coordination Office

- **Career Centers**
  - The school established a career orientation office in 2003, which has become the centre of all career guidance activities.
External Resources

- **Online Matching Portals**
  - An online placement portal is provided on regional level to support all schools and all employers of the area to place students into the career field exploration internships in grade 8. About 15 percent of all placements are facilitated through the online portal.
  - When it comes to the longer internships in grades 9 and 10, however, employers prefer the personal contact of application interviews. This type of internships often leads into apprenticeships and employment.

- **Career Information**
  - The Federal Employment Agency provides up-to-date and comprehensive career information to support teachers, students, and parents.
  - Chambers or specific employers or industries add to the library with on- and offline information to promote less popular working fields and occupations.

Results

Every student has at least one encounter with the world of work in grades 5 to 7. Most students experience two to three job-shadowing days in their early years of schooling at the Moehnesee-Schule. The career orientation teacher ensures that every student experiences several (four to five) different career fields.

Every student completes at least 30 days of workplace practice.

During the six years of schooling the Moehnesee-Schule provides more than 15,000 internship days to about 450 students.

Tips for Practitioners

**Connect Internship with other Career Guidance Activities**

Internships, at the Moehnesee-Schule are integrated into a broader career guidance process and framework. Career orientation ("Studien- und Berufsorientierung") has for a long time been a cross-cutting and central theme of the school. A small team of career orientation teachers, headed by Mr. Meinolf Padberg, developed an innovative, strengths-focused career guidance concept. The principal, Mr. Joerg-Martin Jacob, together with the entire staff, is behind the concept.

Career orientation at the Moehnesee-School supports all students from commencement (grade 5) through to graduation in grade 10 with the development and implementation of individual career plans. Implementation involves many teachers in the preparation and follow-up of activities across subjects.

The school maintains a special career orientation office. Daily opening hours, the supportive presence of a career orientation teacher, a library with career information (on- and offline), desks and computers make the room a central place for all activities around career guidance. The centre is structured into several areas (e.g. space for individual coaching and for meeting in small working groups, computer desks for individual work, a self-help library with career information, space for small training workshops, information boards. Teachers use it flexibly for their work with students, parents, fellow colleagues or external partners before, during and after the internships.

**Strengths Exploration**

Self- and external assessment and reflection methods help students to work on their individual competency profiles and to apply for internships that are meaningful and promising for them.

During the first three years of school (grades 5 to 7), the Moehnesee-Schule runs a unique self-assessment programme called "Starke Seiten" (in German language) or "Treasures" (in English). This raises students’ awareness of their respective strengths and talents, and of the diversity of strengths and talents to be found in the peer group. In addition, it exercises complex reflection methods.
Strengthening Strengths
Becoming aware of their own strengths enables students to build on them and to fulfil their individual potentials. The programme encourages further skills development with project work and workshops and supports students to collect and document all related experiences and conclusions in a pre-structured folder ("Portfolio"). This increases self-understanding and generates first career ideas.

Impact
The positive outcome of the early "Treasures"-programme can be observed in grade 8 when students use the compulsory portfolio instrument: The internship preparation lessons, the computer based self-assessment tests, and the simulated job interviews are easily achievable for these students. Cooperating partners and companies benefit from self-aware, sensitive and reflective interns.

Coordination and Cooperation
30 years’ experience with career orientation clearly shows that transition problems (e.g. mismatch, early termination of training or work contracts, educational detours) can be significantly reduced through the cooperation of all partners. The Moehnesee-Schule, therefore, invites parents, companies and other stakeholders regularly to information days, meetings, job fairs etc. As a measurable result of all activities, more than 90% of the students manage the school to work transition into either a suitable apprenticeship contract with a company or into a vocational school.

Satisfaction rates are high among graduating students, who feel well prepared for the working life. Lots of the alumni stay in contact with the Moehnesee-Schule; many come back to talk to students and teachers about their labour market experiences.

Conclusions
Internships are also useful as a stand-alone tool. They are the oldest and most popular form of career orientation. The Moehnesee-Schule with its almost ideal concept of offering a finetuned series of internships at different stages of the individual career development process and cooperation with internal and external partners, adds to the employability and employment prospects of students within an economic budget. Moehnesee students receive continuous, extensive support from the principal, the class teachers, subject teachers, the social workers and the career orientation teachers to enhance their career management skills and to gather vivid and meaningful internship experiences. The Moehnesee-Schule is preparing students for the challenges of a fast-changing world and labour market. Internships are very popular tools for individual orientation, preparation, and matching.

Additional information
The Moehnesee-Schule holds three national awards for its culture of support and future orientated mind-set in the field of career orientation.

As a unique example in the landscapes of German federal education systems, the federal German state of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) is providing extra paid hours for qualified career orientation teachers in every school, that organises and develops school specific career orientation concepts on a regional (below federal-state; above municipal) level. The NRW policy “Kein Anschluss ohne Abschluss (KAoA)” ("No graduation without continuation") successfully combines public and private resources for region-wide, timed, and modular career orientation services to all state secondary students.