

PATHWAYS SYSTEM FRAMEWORK™

FIVE KEY STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

As a member of the business community, there are a number of ways in which you can make a substantive contribution to your local education system. Five key strategies along with several specific recommendations are provided in this document:

- I. Help Students Build Career Understanding
- II. Facilitate Classroom Presentations and/or Lead Small Group Student Discussions
- III. Assist Students with Career and/or Leadership Projects
- IV. Offer Experiences Outside of School
- V. Support Program Improvement and Advancement

I. Help Students Build Career Understanding

- **Host a Table at a Career or Industry Fair.** Share information with students and parents about your business, industry sector, and career paths within your organization.
- **Offer a Work-Site Tour.** Facilitate a highly engaging tour of your workplace, explaining the variety of occupations that are employed and including an overview of all aspects of the business (e.g., production, information technology, management, finance, sales, and customer service). Work-site tours typically last between 60 and 90 minutes.
- **Grant a Career Interview.** By phone or in-person, allow a student(s) to interview you about your occupation, your industry sector, and your career path.
- **Offer Resume Writing and Mock Job Interviews Support.** Help students develop and refine their resume and/or conduct mock job interviews. Provide students with constructive feedback and recommendations.
- **Invite Students to Join You at a Work Event.** Students' benefit from attending a work-related event such as a Chamber of Commerce meeting. Prior to the event, talk to students about the importance of networking, business collaboration, and professional conduct.

II. Facilitate Classroom Presentations and/or Lead Small Group Discussions

- **Talk to Students About Your Career or Industry Sector.** Present information about your personal career path and industry sector.

- **Talk to Students About a Specific Technical Skill or Use of Equipment.** Train students to use a particular piece of equipment or learn a specific technical skill.
- **Talk to Students About General Workplace Skills and Culture.** Present students with information about work ethic and workplace skills. Consider including topics such as problem solving, teamwork, self-initiative, planning, project-management, and customer relations.
- **Talk to Students About Career Exploration and Career Navigation.** Expand students' awareness about how to navigate a career, how to conduct an effective interview, and how to create a personal network for a job search.

III. Assist Students with Career or Leadership Projects

- **Act as an Expert Judge.** Assist with student skills or project competitions.
- **Act as Project Coach.** Work with a team of students as they prepare for a project or skills competition.
- **Assist Teachers with Career-Related Units of Study.** Collaborate with a teacher(s) to create units of study or lesson plans that integrate authentic workplace activities and skills.

IV. Offer Experiences Outside of School

- **Host Student Job-Shadows.** Prepare for and facilitate half-day or full-day student job shadows. Ensure that the experience is highly engaging and provides student(s) with a wide-range of experiences and observations.
- **Host Student Internships.** Organize and oversee a short-term or medium-term student internship, lasting from one week to a full semester. Student internships may be paid or unpaid.
- **Host Teacher Externships.** A teacher may reach over 100 students in the course of one school year and thousands over his/her career. Yet, many academic teachers have little experience in the world of business and industry. A strategic investment is to host teachers for a business externship allowing them to make connections between what they teach and what is expected in the workforce.

V. Support Program Improvement And Advancement

- **Serve on a Program Advisory Committee.** Provide school staff with current and industry expectations and information. Most Advisory Committees meet two to four times each year.

- **Act as an Advocate.** When career-related policy changes are needed or when funding is restricting positive change, employer partners can advocate their position to superintendents, school boards, state, and/or national policymakers.
- **Collaborate in a New Program Start-Up or in the Restructuring of Existing Programs.** Completely new industries frequently emerge or move into a region, creating the demand for new programs in schools and colleges. At other times, industry sectors goes through major shifts in technology and processes, and education and training programs need to be significantly modified. Business partners can raise awareness about the need for these changes and can actively advise educators on what those changes should be.
- **Provide Program Resources.** When employers are involved in technical and career-related school programs, they recognize the need for new equipment, additional consumable materials, and supports for student activities such as funding for travel to skills competitions. Employers who believe in the value of the program are often the first ones to step forward with offers of in-kind and monetary donations. If program resources are consistently underfunded, the real need is a policy change. However, for special projects and program improvement efforts, employers that see the win-win potential of a program often find creative ways to offer meaningful support.
- **Share Your Professional Expertise.** Expand students' understanding of the various tasks and aspects of business by sharing focused expertise in areas such as budgeting, logistics, strategic planning, personnel development, information technology, and other focused topics.