

Future Job Force Training In Great River Region

Whenever employers get together these days there seems to be a common thread of conversation about the viability of “today’s youngsters” as tomorrow’s workforce. What are the skills and values of these “Millennials” and the kids that are coming after them? Do they know how to work? Do they possess the “soft skills” they need to get and keep a job? Are they learning any thing about the working world these days in school or during their summers?

All good questions, and fortunately for the future of us all, there is a lot of good news! In a quick survey of the school districts in Lee, Henry, Des Moines and Louisa Counties the following programs were found:

Ag in the Classroom

Although less than two percent of our nation's population is directly involved in agricultural production, a healthy agricultural system is vital to everyone's daily life. Agriculture provides the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, yet many of us take for granted the ease with which we obtain these items. Additionally, the important economic impact of agriculture in the United States and the world is often not realized.

Career Fairs

Many schools in our region hold their own career fairs with local businesses. Others send students to regional career days like those at Southeastern Community College sponsored by Project CAPE (Career Awareness Partners in Education). Most of these events involve a number of employees from a wide variety of businesses who share their personal stories to get students to think about all the pathways there are to different jobs.

Internships & Apprenticeships

An internship or apprenticeship is a much more in-depth and longer term learning/working relationship than a job-shadow. Generally the student works in a temporary position with an emphasis on on-the-job training rather than merely employment.

Job Shadowing

Job shadowing is a work experience option where middle school students get a taste of the working world by spending a work day as a shadow to an experienced worker. Students witness firsthand the work environment, employability and occupational skills in practice, the value of professional training and potential career options. Almost any workplace is a potential job shadowing site

Junior Achievement

JA Worldwide is a partnership between the business community, educators and volunteers — all working together to inspire young people to dream big and reach their potential. JA’s hands-on, experiential programs teach the key concepts of work readiness, entrepreneurship and financial literacy to young people all over the world.

Add to this list the many classroom curriculums that involve resume writing, interview skills and workplace essentials. Then there are the “extra-curricular” activities like the “Banks” in elementary schools and the diverse number of speakers and experiences in 4-H, Scouts, Y Programs, churches and other non-profits that focus on youth.

Actually, the educational atmosphere is ripe with opportunities and young people looking for information and experience. Perhaps the change isn’t in the younger generation, but instead in the willingness of the current workforce to partner, mentor and groom those in our middle schools, high schools and colleges.

Do you spend time in a classroom? Do you allow job shadowing and internships? Does your workplace promote the kinds of experiences that let the next generation of workers learn what it takes to work there? If the answer is no and you would like to change that, visit thelink.scciowa.edu (no www is necessary) and sign up to be part of making certain that tomorrow’s workforce is up to the challenge of tomorrow’s workplace.