

## **Expanding Horizons**

### **Abstract**

#### **Objective:**

To provide rising high school juniors an opportunity to experience potential careers paths in high tech careers within local business and industries.

#### **Overview:**

This school-to-career awareness project will be a collaborative effort between six or more local businesses, industries, and one or more school systems, in partnership with one or more local school systems and one or more post-secondary institutions. Twelve to 20 high school juniors will be selected to participate in an eight and a half-week summer program designed to give an overview of the various high tech careers available in the local business and industry community. Students will be selected based on GPA (i.e., 3.2 or higher), record of absenteeism, leadership potential, recommendations, and an interview. Students must have transportation to participate. Regular attendance, attitude, and academic success during the project will determine students' continuation in project.

During the second half of their junior year, students will be selected to participate in this career exploration project during the following summer. Students will apply to participate by completing a short application, providing a copy of school grades and absences, and three letters of recommendation. A panel comprised of representatives from business and industry, the schools system and project personnel will conduct interview with each applicant. The selected students will be notified by May 1.

To better prepare the students for their career awareness experiences, they will participate in a two-week seminar. This two-week seminar will focus on (a) Interpersonal Skills (b) Teamwork, (c) Safety, (d) Technical Writing, (e) Introduction to Computer Technology, (f) Industrial Economics, and (g) Total Quality Systems. The students will be divided into pairs rotating weekly between the companies. The students will spend a minimum of 30 hours, but not more than 36 hours per week in the designated company. The remaining four hours each week will be spent in a structured, reflection component designed to help students process their work experiences. The last two and one-half days will be devoted to evaluation and out-briefing. Evaluation will be an integral and on-going component of this project, with follow-up at the end of three months, six months and then 12 months beyond the work experience.

A teacher certified in cooperative education or a closely related field will be hired at least six months prior to the two-week seminar and will continue until all follow-up has been completed. The responsibilities of the teacher/coordinator will be to (a) conduct interviews with key company personnel, (b) develop a curriculum for the two-week seminar, (c) conduct the two-week seminar, (d) coordinate the work experiences with the six companies, (e) supervise the work experience rotation, (f) conduct the evaluation and out-briefing, and (g) assist with the evaluation process. Additionally, the grades of each student successfully completing the project will be submitted to the appropriate person in the respective school systems responsible for posting grades to student records.

The curriculum will be developed in concert with expectations of participating companies. All responsibilities and efforts of the teacher will be carried out under the supervision of school personnel and project director.

Participating schools systems will be actively involved in the student selection process and setting appropriate academic expectations. Each school system will (a) provide a contact within each high school to help promote the project and to serve as a drop point for applications and (b) arrange for each student successfully completing the program to receive one Carnegie Unit. Additionally, the school systems will provide classroom space for the two-week seminar and the out-briefing.

Each participating company will provide resources and contact persons during the duration of the project. The responsibilities of each company will be to (a) student wages for work experience, (b) developing, with the assistance of the teacher, the students' work experiences, (c) daily supervision of students while on company property, (d) assistance with curriculum delivery, the weekly reflection component, the out-briefing, and evaluation, and (e) provide meeting space for the weekly reflection component.

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