

## Work Experience Guide

### Introduction

This guide is designed to help design, structure and support Workplace Experiences that work for students, employers, and P-TECH coordinators and teachers. It is part of the NYS P-TECH Work-Based Learning Toolkit, which provides quality approaches and strategies to create high-quality, safe and legal Work-Based Learning experiences for students.

### Work Experience Overview

Work Experience is a Career Preparation activity in which a student is at a worksite doing real work for pay. The student is held to the same expectations as all employees and is evaluated by the workplace supervisor based on workplace expectations and performance. Work Experiences range from regular, paid employment in summer and/or year-round jobs to subsidized employment and learning-rich work experience. There are also a range of Work Experience program types defined at the state and federal levels.

High-quality Work Experiences are designed, supported and structured to meet specific learning outcomes, be educationally rich, and build awareness of the business, its industry sector, its role in the economy and the career options it provides.

### Work Experiences are designed to:

- Expose students to careers and jobs
- Develop and document the P-TECH Professional Skills
- Build occupational knowledge and technical skills
- Provide students with training about potential workplace hazards and how to protect themselves

### After School and Summer Jobs

An after-school, weekend or summer job can be a valuable learning experience and should be looked at as a positive experience for a P-TECH student. Even if not designed or arranged by P-TECH, these experiences offer opportunities for students to develop and practice the P-TECH Professional Skills, build a resume, enhance their financial literacy, develop adult relationships and gather references.

### Subsidized Work Experience

In subsidized Work Experience, the student's wages are subsidized (i.e., paid not by the workplace but by the program through an outside funding source, usually a state- or federally funded program). In these cases, the program is the actual employer, subsidizes all wages and is responsible for taxes and Workers' Compensation insurance. The student must be paid at least the federal, state or local minimum wage (whichever is higher) for all hours worked.

### Learning-Rich Work Experience

Learning-Rich Work Experience is a type of Work Experience that is highly structured by the sponsoring program to promote learning through paid work. The student participates in planning the work and problem solving. Worksite supervisors act as coaches. The

experiences are generally based on projects (instead of tasks) where students interact with each other and regular employees, often work in teams and are paid an appropriate wage.

In addition to the desired elements of Work Experience, Learning-Rich Work Experiences are designed to promote:

- Facilitation of an active learning process
- Exploration of a career field of interest
- Development of research and project-based skills
- Development of teamwork skills
- Demonstration of the P-TECH Professional Skills (see section four of this toolkit)

### **Transitional Jobs**

Transitional Jobs combine wage-paid work, job skills training, and supportive services to help individuals facing barriers to employment succeed in the workforce. Transitional Jobs program participants earn a paycheck, learn skills, may become eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, and receive intensive mentoring and support. Transitional Jobs have also been referred to as public service jobs, community service jobs and publicly funded employment.

### **State and Federal Work Experience**

The New York State Education Department and the U.S. Department of Labor have developed definitions of Work Experience that apply to the programs they sponsor. These definitions are provided in the State and Federal Fact Sheet: Work Experience.

### **The Importance of Structured Activity**

All Work Experiences should include structured activity before, during and after the experience. These activities help ensure that all involved parties have meaningful, productive experiences that result in enriched learning. Proper planning and preparation, attention to legal and safety details, maximization of learning potential, and communication and support for the student, worksite supervisor and employer will help ensure success.

Sustaining and growing Work Experience opportunities and all other Work-Based Learning types depend upon developing and maintaining positive relationships with the employers who are providing opportunities to the students being served. These employers should be treated as valued customers and partners with frequent check-ins to address participation needs as they arise.

### **Work Experience Support Materials**

Tip sheets and checklists for program coordinators, employer partners, and students are provided in this toolkit to help design, structure and support Work Experiences to maximize learning. Each tip sheet supplements the Work-Based Learning essential elements described in section three of this toolkit, and provides a set of success factors and lists of activities or tasks to perform before, during and after the experience. A fact sheet for prospective employers and one describing state and federal work experience programs are also provided.

## Tip Sheets and Fact Sheets

### **Coordinator Tip Sheet: Work Experience Success Factors**

*A tip sheet for P-TECH Coordinators or intermediary partners responsible for implementing and supporting Work Experiences*

NOTE: will include resources for mock interview guide and a resume tip sheet for students. Suggest monster.com and career builder as a resource

### **Teacher Tip Sheet: Work Experience Success Factors**

*A tip sheet to help teachers connect the Work Experience to the classroom*

NOTE: Will include tips to help students articulate the professional skills they master

### **Student Tip Sheet: Work Experience Success Factors**

*A tip sheet to help students get the most out of their Work Experience*

### **Employer Tip Sheet: Work Experience Success Factors**

*A tip sheet for participating employers*

NOTE: Will include “What every Worksite Supervisor should Know,” which addresses how to be clear on expectations, give students some opportunity to learn about the rest of the business and show them what opportunities exist for growth.

### **Employer Fact Sheet: Work Experience**

*A fact sheet that describes what’s involved in a company providing a Work Experience*

### **State and Federal Fact Sheet: Work Experience**

*A fact sheet describing NYS P-TECH Work Experience programs and definitions from the U.S. Department of Labor*