

Teacher Tip Sheet

Workplace Challenge

A tip sheet for teachers on how to help students get the most out of a Workplace Challenge. A Workplace Challenge presents a unique opportunity to support and augment the curriculum and get students more deeply engaged in their learning. If you are coordinating a Workplace Challenge, have a look at the Coordinator Tip Sheet in the WBL Toolkit.

Workplace Challenge

A Workplace Challenge is a Career Preparation activity where small groups of students (four to six per team) are engaged in solving a problem or a challenge issued by an employer in consultation with a Career Pathways teacher. The structure of the challenge is based upon effective project-based learning approaches, enhanced by a focus on the targeted Career Pathway and an authentic problem or issue faced by an employer partner. The students are engaged in career-focused, project-based learning and work as a team over time to identify possible solutions. They then create and deliver a presentation on their solution to the employer.

Workplace Challenges are designed to promote:

- The opportunity to develop, practice and demonstrate new skills, including technical and occupational skills, problem-solving and research skills, presentation skills and teamwork skills
- Exposure to jobs, careers and working adults
- The opportunity to enhance the relevance of academic instruction through the application of applied knowledge

Teacher Tips

Workplace Challenge Success Factors

When planning and implementing a Workplace Challenge, keep the following in mind.

Before the Workplace Challenge

- Meet with your P-TECH coordinator to:
 - ✓ Familiarize yourself with the Workplace Challenge Activity Guide.
 - ✓ Encourage the Workplace Challenge host to develop a real-world problem or issue—one that the industry is facing today. Make it real.
 - ✓ Identify and document desired student learning outcomes.
- Meet with your P-TECH coordinator and challenge host(s) to:
 - ✓ Share the current focus of classroom training activities and how the challenge can support key concepts being taught.
 - ✓ Make sure the challenge is one that students can potentially address and teachers, instructors, and program staff can support.
 - ✓ Make sure that the Workplace Challenge and its solution are tied to curriculum goals, and that appropriate resources are in place to support the challenge.
 - ✓ Develop a timeline for the challenge. Include when and where it will be issued and when, where, and with whom the solution presentation will take place.
- Recruit students.
 - ✓ Form teams of four to six students to work together on addressing the challenge.

- Prepare students for the Workplace Challenge.
 - ✓ Share and review the Student Tip Sheet.
 - ✓ Help students research the host company and industry.
 - ✓ Schedule regular time for the students to work on the challenge.
- Clarify roles with classroom teachers and other school staff. Ensure they are prepared to be engaged in the challenge and have the information they need to support students in completing the challenge successfully.
- Work with your P-TECH coordinator to address logistics.
 - ✓ Organize the resources needed to support students as they address the challenge.
 - ✓ Distribute and collect appropriate forms.
 - ✓ Make sure transportation, and necessary safety gear and equipment or tools are provided.

During the Workplace Challenge

- Provide support to students.
 - ✓ Meet with them regularly (at least weekly) as they address the challenge and monitor their progress.
 - ✓ Provide opportunities for them to reflect on the challenge while it's in process.
- Make the classroom connection.
 - ✓ Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their Workplace Challenge in the classroom. Help students think about what they're learning about the industry and how to apply academic concepts to the issue at hand.
 - ✓ Help students practice skills that are relevant to completion of the challenge in the classroom (e.g. presentation skills, problem-solving skills, teamwork skills).

After the Workplace Challenge

- Reflect on learning.
 - ✓ Have students discuss what they learned and what else they'd like to learn.
- Work with the P-TECH coordinator to:
 - ✓ Assess the impact and value of the Workplace Challenge and make recommendations for future adjustments.
 - ✓ Identify a potential next step with the employer/challenge host.
 - ✓ Have students write thank-you notes to challenge host.
- Document student learning and record the experience.

Go Deeper

Here are some activities that can help deepen the impact of the Workplace Challenge:

- Have the challenge follow a series of Work-Based Learning activities.
- Have several teams of students address the same challenge and reward the most innovative solutions through a competition.
- Sequence a series of challenges for the same team of students so that the experiences build on one another.
- Model aspects of the challenge after reality TV shows such as “Shark Tank” (with the students pitching their solutions to a group of employers).
- Generate publicity about the challenge by issuing a press release about the challenge and submit it to local newspapers and television stations.